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ANNE CONWAY (MRS. DAMER) "DARED" BY HUME.

THE
QUEENS OF SOCIETY

BY
GRACE AND PHILIP WHARTON

NEW EDITION WITH A PREFACE

BY
JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY, M.P.

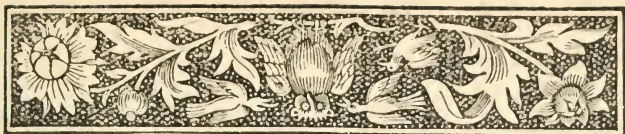
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MADAME RÉCAMIER.

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THERE is no flirt so bad as a French flirt, and no fool so ridiculous as a French fool. The life of Madame Récamier is the life of a flirt surrounded by fools. Its interest is derived from the fact that the latter, while fools in connection with her, were great men apart from her—the Bonapartes and Chateaubriands. The amusement of her life is derived from the fact that her beauty made fools of them.

The idol of a Montmorency was the daughter of a notary at Lyons named Bernard, who gave her the imposing prænomena, Jeanne Françoise Julie Adelaide. Of these she used the third, and her admirers turned it into that of Shakspeare's heroine, whom she resembled about as much as Lucien Bonaparte did Romeo, in whose character he addressed her. She was born on the 4th of December, 1777. In 1784 M. Bernard succeeded in obtaining the post of Receveur des Finances, at Paris, and his daughter was therefore sent to the Convent or La Déserte at Lyons, but in due course rejoined her parents at Paris. Though still quite a child, she was already remarkable

for her beauty; and her foolish mother, very proud of it, increased her natural vanity by dressing the little girl up elaborately, and taking her to places of public amusement, when her proper sphere was the school-room. It was thus that she was once brought to Versailles, and made a *début* at court which was a fitting omen of her future successes. At that time, 1789, poor Louis was already the slave of his people, and made any sacrifice to appease them. The public was even admitted to the king's dining-room, to stare at royalty while it ate; and the Bernards entered among the crowd. Marie Antoinette, struck with the little girl's beauty, sent for her after dinner, to have her measured with her daughter, who was of about the same age.

At the age of fifteen, Juliette Bernard was married to a man of forty-three, and we are asked to believe that this was by her own will. We are more inclined to credit, what we are also assured was the case, that this unequal marriage, though actually performed, was only in name a marriage, and that M. Récamier behaved to his child-wife only in the character of a father. Such is the manner in which the sacred tie of matrimony may be desecrated in France; and the niece and biographer of Juliette Bernard, Madame Le Normant, can tell us this without a blush, or the slightest excuse for either party.

M. Récamier was a rich banker, the son of a merchant at Lyons. He was generous and good-natured to a fault, and, at the same time, utterly without feeling. To-day he would lend a friend any amount of money; to-morrow, if the same friend died, he would coolly murmur, 'Another drawer shut,' and forget him. Like George Selwyn, he was devotedly fond of executions; but Selwyn enjoyed the sight of suffering as a keen pleasure: M. Récamier, too insensible to be impressed by it at all, could only appreciate the show. At the time of his marriage, the Reign of Terror had been inaugurated, and M. Récamier could indulge his peculiar taste to his heart's content. He repaired every day, by way of a cheerful walk, to the Place de la Concorde, where the guillotine was being fed with human prey, beneath a colossal statue of Liberty, and thus, he said, accustomed himself to the idea of a death, which sooner or later he fully expected to suffer in his turn. Happy

times, when one could look calmly forward to the blow of the knife, and know that in that same basket the head one wore would have to fall ; that the horrid cries, with which you pursued the wretched victim to the scaffold, might to-morrow greet you too, as you sat huddled in the tumbril.

But the guillotine, which demanded so many a better head, left that of M. Récamier on his broad shoulders, only an act of gratitude on its part for the regularity with which he attended its levées. The Terror passed ; the people, weary of blood, opened the churches again, to exchange the excitement of wholesale murder for that of retail 'religion ;' crowded to the theatres, the promenades, the public amusements, and danced as merrily as if none of them had lost a friend for years. It was now that Juliette Récamier began to cause that sensation which gave her at a later period such wonderful influence over the society of the consulate.

Arrived at a womanly age, though only twenty, and looking younger still, in contrast to her husband of forty-eight, she had come to the full of her beauty. At this period it seems to have been a sensuous beauty, where worth rather than mind gave the expression. Her white glistening shoulders were its especial glory ; her whole figure, including the feet, was classically moulded. The face was short and round rather than oval ; the hair and eyes were brown ; the complexion was brilliant, almost, one might say, dazzling ; the features neat, regular, French rather than classical ; and the head set easily upon the shoulders. The look, while it showed a consciousness of superiority, too grand, perhaps, to be called vanity, was alluring from a certain kindness and sympathy about it. You could tell at once that she was a woman and no more—nay, something less, a Frenchwoman. Of the angel she had certainly nothing, for the face was earthly, though one of the most beautiful on earth. She was rather a goddess, with all the pride, and much of the sensuality of one, though that sensuality was as refined as one imagines the pleasures of Queen Juno.

The writer remembers to have seen at the house of her biographer, Madame Le Normant, the famous portrait of her by Gérard, which she gave to the most successful of her admirers,

Prince Augustus of Prussia, and which by his will he left again to her. She is there depicted in a vapour bath, reclining rather than sitting on a species of classical couch, with the beautiful feet bare and her hair and dress arranged after the model of the statues of Diana.

Perhaps her complexion was more striking than any other of her charms, and when she appeared in public it more than once drew round her an awkward crowd of admirers. Thus on one occasion Madame Récamier was deputed to hold the plate at St. Roch, for some charitable *quête*, and knelt, as is usual in these cases, in the middle of the church. Two gentlemen remained at her side to protect her, but found the office on this occasion no sinecure. The crowd became enormous; the people stood on the chairs, benches, even on the altars, climbed the pillars, and pushed about, only to catch a glimpse of the lovely *quêteuse*. The money collected amounted to the enormous sum of twenty thousand francs. The French will do anything, and give anything, to gaze upon a beautiful woman. The writer remembers a curious instance of this in Paris. A small café in the Rue Richelieu had been fortunate enough, some years ago, to obtain the services of a very handsome Italian girl. The very first night that she appeared at the *comptoir*, the café was soon filled to overflowing, and in a few hours a crowd was collected round the door. The second night, when the fame of the fair attendant's beauty had spread abroad, this crowd was increased to such an extent that the neighbouring *garde* of soldiers was called in to keep order. The writer remembers well the excited state of the mob. The whole of the Rue Richelieu, near the Boulevards was thronged with the curious. The *garde* was placed at the door of the café, and admitted only a few at a time. They entered in high expectation, and returned in disgust. The writer happened to be among those admitted, and in the café he saw no one of more interest than an elderly, dark-tinted Frenchwoman, who was making a handsome sum out of the *éclat* thus produced. It proved that on the previous night the phenomenon of beauty had been offered, and accepted, an enormous sum to appear elsewhere, and in a very different character, and the owners of

the café were reaping the benefit of her mere reputation. On issuing from it the writer and others were drenched in a shower of water thrown from the windows above. This and the disappointment produced a tumult, which forced the *garde* to use their bayonets, and was not even then calmed down, till a small force of cuirassiers appeared on the scene and drove back the incensed mob. This took place in 1854; and it can therefore well be imagined what enthusiasm the pleasure-seekers of 1796 evinced when Madame Récamier appeared among them, dazzling all eyes with her loveliness.

Among the earliest tributes to this beauty were those of two of the Bonapartes, the emperor himself and his brother Lucien. The first she met twice only. On the 10th of December, 1797, the Directoire gave a fête in honour of the conqueror of Italy. It took place in the large court of the Luxembourg, where an altar to Liberty had been erected. Talleyrand, the turncoat, read to the future emperor an address of praise. Madame Récamier, who could not from her seat see him well, rose to obtain a better view of the hero of the day. The crowd which had been staring at him, turned to admire the beauty of the day, and hailed her with a murmur of approbation. Napoleon's vanity was hurt; he showed his impatience, and bent upon her one of his chilling condemnatory looks. She sat down at once. Thus in the outset of her life she had the satisfaction of rivaling Napoleon himself in popular admiration.

The next meeting took place in the winter of 1799. Lucien Bonaparte, whose admiration of Madame Récamier was then the talk of Paris, was giving a fête, at which she appeared. Soon after her arrival, she saw near the fireplace of the principal room a man whom she took to be Joseph Bonaparte, whom she had often met at the house of their common friend, Madame de Staël, and bowed to him. Her greeting was returned, but the next moment she discovered her mistake, and found that she had been salaaming to the First Consul himself. She had heard of him as so severe and cold, that she was astonished at the mildness of his look towards her. Later, Fouché came up to her and whispered, 'The First Consul thinks you charming.'

In the course of the evening the great man was holding by the hand of a daughter of Lucien's, a child of four years old. Talking to his flatterers he forgot it, and the little thing began to cry. '*Ah, pauvre petite,*' said he, 'I forgot you.'

Madame Récamier, afterwards the victim of this man, remembered to his advantage the tenderness with which he uttered these words.

When dinner was announced, Napoleon gave proof of his pride and vulgarity—for he was, perhaps, one of the vulgarest men that ever sat on a throne—and, without offering his arm to any one, stalked out first. Cambacérès, the Second Consul, placed himself next to Madame Récamier at table, when Napoleon cried out to him, '*Ah ! ah ! citizen Consul, close to the prettiest, eh ?*'

The dinner was soon over. Bonaparte, the great man there, ate, as usual, very fast. This bad habit lost him, in after years, the battle of Leipsic, and even then spoiled his temper. Before the battle he breakfasted off a leg of mutton stuffed with sage and onions—no bad dish ; but he ate so fast, in his hurry to be on the field, that the meal was followed by a violent attack of indigestion : his head was affected by it, and in his agony he could not give proper attention to the details of the fight.

After dinner, on the previous occasion, he rose, without waiting for any one. The rest, of course, followed his illustrious example. As he went out, he said to Madame Récamier, 'Why did you not sit next to me at dinner ?' It turned out that he had told Bacciocchi to place her near him. In the salon he took his stand near the piano : the instrumental music bothered him, and he thumped on the piano and called loudly for Garat, who sang in his best strain. After the song he came up to Madame Récamier, who had been listening enrapt, and said, 'So you like music, madame.' He would have gone on, but Lucien joined them, and the First Consul, who knew his brother's admiration for the beauty, retired. Such were the manners of the consulate, and such Madame Récamier's place in its vulgar court.

Lucien Bonaparte, who interrupted this conversation, was her most devoted admirer. He was then four-and-twenty,

taller and more graceful than his brother, but far less intellectual. He met his idol at a dinner given by M. Sapey, and soon after sent her a collection of letters, entitled, 'Letters from Romeo to Juliette,' in which he expressed his devotion in very ordinary un-Romeoic language, though passionate enough. He must have looked very foolish when Madame Récamier, who had never been addressed in this strain before, handed him back his first love-letter in the midst of a party, told him it was very pretty, but advised him to cultivate politics, in which he might succeed, rather than literature, in which he might, perhaps, fail.

Here we catch another glimpse of French morals under the consulate. Juliette confided the addresses of the First Consul's brother to her husband. He was far from indignant, and begged her not to repulse them too harshly. He knew that his success in business depended much on his good standing with the rising family, and was quite willing to sacrifice the honour of his wife to his own prospects. She, however, had virtue enough to be captivated neither by the handsome face nor by the high position of her admirer, and met his advances with merry laughter. He persisted for a time and then withdrew, thoroughly wounded by her contempt, and—we might hope in vain—ashamed of himself. Some months after he sent M. Sapey to obtain his letters of Romeo to Juliette from the heroine. She declined to give them up. French morals again. She knew that if she did so they might be used against her, and she resisted all attempts to obtain them.

M. Récamier's position as a wealthy banker gave him in those days an importance which he would not have held under the empire. Madame Récamier's renown as a beauty added to the reputation of the house, and in their hotel in the Chaussée d'Antin, then Rue du Mont Blanc, they received all the planets who revolved round their sun—Napoleon. The generals of the consulate were there, Bernadotte, Masséna, and Moreau: the ministers and others, Lucien Bonaparte, Eugène Beauharnais, and Fouché, M. de Narbonne, M. de Lamoignon, and Adrien and Matthieu Montmorency. Then there came Madame de

Staël, Camille Jordan, La Harpe, Lemontez, Legouv  , and Emmanuel Dupaty.

The two Montmorencys were her especial friends. Both had been in exile ; the one returned from England, the other from America. They were first cousins, and great friends. Adrien, who was afterwards the Duc de Laval, was about thirty-one at this period. He was afterwards ambassador at Madrid, Rome, Vienna, and London. He was proud of his old name, and a Royalist by predilection. He is said to have been clever, but had an unfortunate stutter, which militated against his success.

His cousin, Matthieu, was a much better man. He served in the army in America, and for a long time was gay and dissipated. The death of a beloved brother, the Abb   de Laval, who was a victim to the Revolution, cured him. Matthieu, although belonging to the oldest family in France, had espoused liberal ideas, and even supported the Revolution. He accused himself of being indirectly the cause of his brother's death. This idea weighed upon him, and in time he became, under the influence of his intimate friend, Madame de Sta  l, a well-minded and religious man. The proof of this is that he did his utmost to impress Madame R  camier with religious feelings. He was very intimate with her, and used his friendship in the best possible manner, by way of making her better than he found her. His letters to her prove that he had doubts, not of her character at that time, but of her power to resist the many temptations of the gay society in which she mixed ; and he was right.

Another of these friends, the celebrated La Harpe, had also been wild at one time, and changed his mode of life. There is a touching anecdote of him in Madame Le Normant's life of our heroine. Madame R  camier had invited him to her country-house at Clichy : a number of young blades were there assembled, and a doubt was raised as to the sincerity of La Harpe's conversion. It was resolved to test it. It was known that he had always been a great admirer of women ; and one of M. R  camier's nephews, a pretty beardless youth, dressed himself in woman's clothes, and quietly took his place near the fire in La Harpe's bed-room. The guests being let into the secret,

placed themselves behind a screen, and awaited the arrival of the convert. He came at last, and, walking straight to his bed, fell on his knees and said his prayers. The whole company was shamed. He prayed long and earnestly, and at last, rising, perceived the would-be lady at his fireside. He took her by the hand, led her to the door, and told her, kindly, but decisively, that whatever she might have to say to him he would hear the next day. The boy, utterly ashamed of himself, forgot his part, and could say nothing: the spectators made their escape, quite convinced of the sincerity of the old man, and the circumstance was never again alluded to.

Poor simple La Harpe was destined to be made a victim. He was dragged into a marriage with a girl who, three weeks after they were wedded, sued for a divorce, on the ground that she hated him. The divorce took place, but the old man freely forgave his young wife, and thought himself well rid of such an absurd connection.

In 1802 an affair took place which put an end to the relation between Madame Récamier and the Bonapartes. Her father, M. Bernard, had been made one of the heads of the post-office. A secret royalist correspondence had been circulated in the south of France, and the postmaster had been accused—as it would seem rightly—of countenancing it. He was arrested. On the night of his capture, Madame Bacciocchi, the consul's sister, was dining with Madame Récamier: the rest of the party consisted of Madame de Staël, La Harpe, Matthieu de Montmorency, M. de Narbonne, and Madame Bernard. A letter was brought in to the last, who on reading it fainted. It turned out to contain the news of her husband's arrest. Madame Récamier instantly applied to Madame Bacciocchi, to obtain for her an interview with Napoleon, and the latter gave her a rendezvous at the opera. Thither Madame Récamier went, when all other resources failed, but Madame Bacciocchi now openly showed her indisposition to help her. Bernadotte, who was present, came to her aid, and through his means, the *mis en accusation* was cancelled. On this Madame Récamier hastened to the Temple, where her father was confined, and induced one of the gaolers to admit her to his cell. She had

scarcely imparted the good news to the old gentleman, when the gaoler came in, dragged her out by the arms, and thrust her into a dark cell, where she had to endure imprisonment for two hours, which seemed like two years. She was released at last, and it was then explained that the authorities had come, at the moment of her entrance, to take her father to the *préfecture*, and that the gaoler, fearing discovery, had used this means to conceal her. It was a strange situation for the greatest beauty and almost the first leader of fashion then in the French capital. Bernadotte, whose conduct on this occasion was very generous, saved M. Bernard from a trial which might, like some that took place not long after, have ended in condemnation to death. As it was, Bernard, though set at liberty, was disgraced and deprived of his appointment.

The first eight years of the present century were the period of Madame Récamier's reign as a social sovereign. Her husband's banking-house had become one of the first in France, so that their wealth was enormous. Besides the splendid apartment in the Rue du Mont Blanc, they had a charming country-seat at Clichy, and at both places received the first society, political, literary, and general, of the metropolis.

We now find the beautiful woman of five-and-twenty in the zenith of her popularity. Her manners and her heart were both as good as her beauty; and though a desperate coquette—far more so than English ideas could countenance—she does not appear, from anything that we know, to have passed the bounds of innocent flirtation. The age, the indifference, and the stolid character of her husband, added to the peculiarity of their connection, to which we have already referred, may be some excuse for a succession of flirtations, which arose, less from a love of admiration, than from a desire to be loved by some one. At least they do not appear to have spoiled her heart, which remained good to the last; and before we condemn her, we must take into consideration the great difference of French ideas on this subject from our own. We have already shown how she treated the advances of Lucien Bonaparte; but she does not seem to have been so indifferent to a succession of celebrated men, who admired her no less ardently. Yet, lest any of our

readers should suspect that these flirtations were really carried too far, let us give the testimony of a contemporary who was certainly not the man to ascribe virtue to any woman who had not shown ample proof of it—Charles James Fox. He pronounced her to be ‘the only woman who united the attractions of pleasure to those of modesty.’

Fox was in Paris in 1802 : it is said that he went there in order to make researches at the Scotch college, as an addition to his materials for a projected history of the Stuarts ; but however this may be, he turned the excursion into a wedding tour ; and before he set out, was privately married to Mrs. Armistead, who should have been his wife many years before. His fame was great in France. He had come forward in England as ‘the Man of the People,’ and was quite prepared to receive from the Republicans of France the full honours of the character he had assumed. He was everywhere hailed as a great patriot ; and Napoleon, always anxious to conciliate the English Whigs, and form, if possible, a Bonapartist faction in this country, received him with marked interest. His portrait was to be seen in every shop window, and the young beaux of Paris, who had heard of his fame as a dandy, were all eager to imitate his style of dress.

Among other celebrities to whom he was introduced was of course Madame Récamier. One afternoon she called for him in her carriage, and insisted that he should accompany her in it along the Boulevards ; ‘for,’ said she, ‘before you came, I was the fashion ; it is a point of honour, therefore, that I should not appear jealous of you.’ We are told that some days after this drive, while Fox was sitting with Madame Récamier in her box at the Opera, a Frenchman entered and placed in the hands of each a copy of an ode, in which the English statesman was eulogized under the title of Jupiter, and his companion under the name of Venus ! On glancing at this impertinent effusion, Fox was somewhat confused ; but Madame Récamier only laughed at it, and assured him that she cared nothing for the opinion of the good people of Paris. She was, indeed, a little too careless of her reputation, and it is no wonder that many of her friendships should have been construed into intrigues.

At that time the masked balls at the Opera were attended by

respectable people, which is not now the case. Ladies went to them in mask and domino, but gentlemen in simple evening dress : there was little or no dancing ; and the amusement of the evening depended on the mystery which surrounded the fair portion of the assembly, who were permitted to accost freely and even attach themselves to any gentleman present. It was then that a lady could satisfy a long-cherished grudge by plain truths spoken to an enemy's face under protection of her incognito, or even declare a secret passion, while the ugly little mask concealed her modest blushes. The astonished or disgusted individual thus addressed, applied himself to a study of the voice, the eyes, flashing brightly from their oval caverns, the walk, the manner, and the half-concealed figure, of the person who addressed him, with more or less success ; and strange adventures followed on these interviews ; strange acquaintances were often formed at the balls of the Opera. In Germany this custom is still preserved even among the upper classes ; and the writer, who has frequented many a masked ball in that country, can testify to the excitement of these mysterious addresses, and the amusement or disappointment which ensues on the revelation or discovery which takes place, if the lady can be induced to remove her mask.

Under the protection of her brother-in-law, M. Laurent Récamier, Juliette frequented these balls, and there made several acquaintances, which she afterwards pursued. Among these was the young prince, afterwards King of Würtemberg, who, enchanted by the voice and manner of the mask who accosted him, went so far as to force a ring from her finger. Madame Récamier resented this liberty, and spoke with such dignity, that, having discovered who she was, the prince returned it to her the next day with a letter of humble apology.

Metternich, who was in Paris about this time, was another Opera acquaintance of Juliette's. She met and talked to him there for a whole season ; but though the prince who was then first secretary of the Austrian embassy, knew who she was, he was deterred for a long time from following up the acquaintance, on account of the known hostility of Napoleon to Madame Récamier.

1867

1868

1869

1870



THE GRAND DUKE'S VISIT TO MADAME RÉCAMIER.

She seems to have attacked princes and royalties with particular energy ; and the balls at the Opera-house made her acquainted with many heads, which have been since crowned. The most devoted of these was the Grand-Duke of Mecklenburgh-Strelitz, whom she met at the Opera in 1807 or 1808. On discovering who she was, he was very anxious to visit at her house ; but Madame Récamier, knowing Napoleon's sentiments towards herself, refused at first to allow him, by visiting her, to draw down any ill-will on his own head. He insisted, however, so pertinaciously, that she consented to receive him one evening, and the grand-duke, to avoid recognition, left his carriage some doors off, and proceeded on foot to her hotel. Finding the door open, he attempted to glide past the porter's lodge without being seen ; but the wary Cerberus was on the alert, and the grand-duke had not gone far, before he darted out after him, suspecting a thief or trespasser of some sort. The grand-duke, anxious not to be known, even to the porter, heard him call after him, but instead of replying, hastened on. The concierge followed. The grand-duke ran. The porter ran after him. The grand-duke reached the main staircase and rushed up ; the porter followed three steps at a time, calling angrily after the intruder. They reached the ante-room of the apartment together ; and the incensed concierge seized the young prince by the collar. He resisted, and a loud and angry scuffle ensued, the noise of which reached Madame Récamier, who came out and was highly amused at seeing the state of affairs. Of course the grand-duke was released, and the porter, who had made such an unpleasant mistake, retired ' with his tail between his legs.'

The admiration of the prince for Madame Récamier was not merely the fleeting fancy of a young man. It took such hold upon him that in 1843, thirty-six years after this event, he wrote to her from Strelitz, to ask her to send him the portrait which we have already described, and which, on the death of Prince August of Prussia, had returned to the possession of its original. The request was very prudently refused, and the portrait, which was considered Gérard's *chef-d'œuvre*, and excited so much attention that the painter, pestered with visits to his studio to

see it, threatened to destroy it if another came, still hangs in the boudoir of Madame Le Normant; but the letter of the grand-duke is remarkable, as containing proof that Napoleon regarded Madame Récamier's salon, where so many great men met, with not only suspicion, but the hatred of a rival. It appears from this letter that he declared openly in Josephine's drawing-room that 'he should regard as a personal enemy every foreigner who frequented Madame Récamier's parties.' He was, in fact, jealous of the popularity of the fair Parisian. Like Louis XIV. he wished to monopolize the admiration of all France, and could not forgive any one—even a woman—who enjoyed any share of it, unless openly attached to himself or his government. Like the same monarch, he was intensely jealous of superiority of mind; and, like his present successor, longed to be considered a thinker, though his real talents lay, as the present emperor's do also, in action and administration. As Louis XIV. hated Madame de Sévigné because of her wit, Napoleon persecuted Madame de Staël for hers, when he found that she refused to join him, and chose to remain independent. The salons of Paris were, in fact, his chief opponents. Europe might bow before him, but he could not prevent his own subjects talking against his ambition in their own drawing-rooms; he could not prevent it, that is, without extreme measures, and these he finally took. In the exile into which he drove Madame Staël, and afterwards Madame Récamier too, Napoleon has proved his weakness. It is not the part of a *soi-disant* 'conqueror of the world' to war against women. Louis XIV., though equally vain, was too well-bred to go so far. Napoleon added to his intense vanity the overbearing pride of an upstart, and the vulgarity which is a distinguishing feature of all his family. To none are Shakespeare's words so applicable as to him and his successor—

The beggar mounted rides his horse to death.'

But to return to Madame Récamier's princely admirers. Germany yielded her one more in the person of Prince Ludwig of Bavaria, now the ex-king. This celebrated monarch was then quite a young man, probably only in his twenty-first year; and

it is therefore interesting to note that his intimacy with Madame Récamier arose from the very points in his character which have since placed him so high among European sovereigns, while in conduct he is almost their acknowledged buffoon—his love of art, and his admiration of womanly beauty. Indulging the first, he raised Munich from a small insignificant commercial town to the noblest capital—as far as artistic beauty goes—in Europe ; while his liberal patronage has revived in Germany a peculiarly Teutonic school of painting and architecture, at a time when that country threatened to fall in these respects far to the rear of England and France. Indulging the latter, or perhaps we may say unable to resist it, he has given to his court an example of immorality, which the whole society of Bavaria has been too ready to follow, and brought his country to a revolution, the most ludicrous and most disgraceful of any that followed the volcano of February, 1848, and his own head crownless towards the grave. Who has not heard of Lola Montez and the German kingdom which this Irish dancer, with her terrible eyes, had power to upset? Who has not been told of the gallery of beauties which Ludwig of Bavaria collected in his palace; some from among the heroines of his own amours, others from the more respectable beauties of his court?

Ludwig is the Charles II., perhaps we may say the Haroun al-Raschid, of Germany. In the present day, an old man, with one foot in the grave, he is still beloved by the very subjects who forced him to abdicate. This is owing, not to the sovereign, but to the man. Never was a monarch so thoroughly fitted to be the friend of his subjects; while, in letting himself down to their level, he exacted their respect. Many an anecdote is told of him at Munich, to prove his homely, easy, yet royal character. On one occasion, walking jauntily up the Ludwig's Strasse, and talking familiarly with every one he met, he spied a man who did not take his hat off to the king. He walked up to him, knocked his hat off his head, and then lectured him in terms that the man could not forget. On another, he was carrying privately under his cloak a bundle of game to, report says, some damsel, whose graces he wished to win—let

us hope, rather to some starving family (for he is capable of both), when one of the birds happened to fall on the pavement. An old woman who recognized the king, picked it up and shuffling after him, crying at the top of her harsh voice, '*Ihre Majestät—Ihre Majestät hat was fallen lassen.*' The king was seen to hurry on in despair, leaving the *spiel-hahn* to the old woman; but he had been recognized, and the story went the round of the capital.

Ludwig can never have been a handsome man, though tall, slight, and gay in manner. He is ready with an answer, kind yet dogmatic, and often unsparing in his remarks. At an advanced age, with no teeth and very little hair, he can now be nothing but the parody of the dashing young prince, who at Paris tried to make love to Madame Récamier in 1807. But he is still, what Madame de Staël then pronounced him,—'*un bon homme qui a de l'esprit et de l'âme.*'

He was among those royalties who implored Madame Récamier, the mere banker's wife, to be allowed to visit her. But she cared little for the Prince of Bavaria, and there were the same reasons for excluding him from her salon as she had given to the Grand-Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. He insisted, however, under the plea of a wish to see her portrait by Gérard; but whether it was the artist or the woman the young prince admired the more on this occasion, remains, perhaps, to be proved. He was, at any rate, admitted; and in after years (1824) when he became King of Bavaria, and was travelling with a view to collecting pictures for his famous Pinakothek, he again met Madame Récamier at Rome, and there renewed his acquaintance with her.

We thus see this beautiful woman filling the part, which, of all others, must most captivate a Frenchwoman, attaching to herself all the young sprigs of royalty in Europe, and assembling in her salon all the men of mark in France. Nay, more, we find her provoking unconsciously the jealousy of an emperor, and sympathising with the woman, Madame de Staël, of whose talents he was the most envious, and whom he could not forgive for being cleverer than himself. In her person he banished talent in 1803, and he was only waiting for a fit oppor-

tunity to send beauty after it. In after years, when he coveted the glory of Louis XIV.'s court, he regretted these measures, and wished to have as much mind and loveliness around his throne as France could supply. Unfortunately he had sent the best of both out of his country, and except for such splendour as money could furnish, and for such eccentricities as the emperor himself gave out, this imperial court at the Tuileries had nothing very brilliant about it at any time.

The brilliancy of a court held in the Rue du Mont Blanc, on the other hand, in the hôtel of Madame Récamier, had certainly something better than money to support it. Both face and brain were there. But alas! for the degenerate days of the consulate, money made all the difference, and without *écus*, Madame Récamier might keep a few true friends, but could not be the leader of society. In 1806 the trial came. It was the old story—*the bank broke*.

Too many banks have done the same thing since to make the story of this failure at all interesting. There are only two peculiar points connected with it. One is, that a million of francs from the bank of France would have saved Récamier, and was refused, less, it is thought, for commercial than for political or even personal reasons; the other, that this loan was refused, although the failure of Récamier seems to have involved the whole credit of Paris. Napoleon, who made bank, bourse, and exchange his toys as much as army and navy, may or may not have countenanced this refusal. It matters little now. He had invited, had even pressed, Madame Récamier through Fouche, to attach herself to his household, and her refusal doubtless irritated a man who could not bear to be slighted.

The result only remains. Récamier, though not quite ruined, had to sell everything, even to his wife's jewels. There is a difference to be noticed here between English and French society. The friends of Madame Récamier not only did not desert her at this crisis, but became more her friends than ever. Junot, among others, tried to impress the emperor with commiseration for this catastrophe. He replied coldly, 'You would not show more regard to the widow of a marshal of

France, dead on the field of battle.' It is certainly reassuring in human nature, to find that all her *best* acquaintances remained steadfast to the fallen Queen of Society. Bernadotte, Matthieu de Montmorency, and Madame de Staël all expressed their thorough sympathy with her ; and when, to increase her misfortunes, there came the death of her mother, Madame Bernard, these assurances were actively renewed.

In looking back over this period of her first glory, which thus came to an end, we have only one more episode to relate—that of her visit to England during the peace of Amiens. Well introduced by the Duc de Guignes, who had been formerly ambassador at St. James's, and still more recommended by her reputation and beauty, she was received in the highest circles in London. The Duchess of Devonshire, whose life has been previously narrated, was among those at whose receptions she made a prominent figure ; and at Devonshire House she made the acquaintance of the future duchess, Lady E. Foster, whom she met again in 1824 at Rome, where the then duchess figured as the patroness of arts and literature. Madame Récamier's short visit to London was as brilliant as that of a foreigner could be in our jealous capital. She was *fêtée*, and made more of than most French beauties. Probably her beauty was less striking in England than in France ; yet Englishmen and Englishwomen of the day, which is more, paid her a noble tribute of admiration. The wife of the Paris banker had the extreme honour (?) of being admired by the Prince of Wales (George IV.), and her doings and sayings were recorded in the papers. On the whole, her transit of the Channel was not ill repaid, and she suffered less than Madame de Staël, who, when a celebrated but awkward wit sat between her and Madame Récamier, was hurt by his *gaucherie* in saying, 'Here I am, between wit and beauty.' If Madame de Staël was really pained by the remark, it proves her vainer and less sensible than we had thought.

The failure of M. Récamier introduces us to another phase of his wife's existence, which, we must confess, is less agreeable. In 1807 she visited her intimate friend Madame de Staël, in her retreat at the Château de Coppet, near Geneva. Among

the illustrious personages at this period living in Geneva was the Prince August of Prussia. A weak, yet amiable youth of four-and-twenty, he made and cultivated the friendship of the author of 'Corinne.' He was handsome after a German model, and felt deeply the dishonour of his country, which had made him a quasi prisoner at Geneva.

At Coppet he met Madame Récamier, and conceived a passion for this woman, who was six years older than himself. Madame Récamier, without wishing to do her injustice, was always, we must confess, very eager to entrap princes, and readily improved the present occasion. For three months she flirted with him inexorably, and succeeded in capturing him. The banks of the lake of Geneva aided her in her designs. She taught the young man the art of love, and in return he, very handsomely, we must own, offered her his hand as well as his heart. This was a strange proposal to a married woman, but it does not appear to have disconcerted Madame Récamier. How could she act? She was married; what could she do? She could not give up a prince of the blood; yet, being married, she could not become his wife. She took a measure which, if not disgusting to French ideas, is certainly so to ours. She accepted his love, and agreed to be his wife; and to make this possible, she actually *wrote to her husband and proposed a divorce!* One can imagine the reply of an Englishman to such a request; but M. Récamier was not at all surprised. His fortune was broken; he was reduced to very limited means; he had never been more than a father to his wife, in spite of his vows. He agreed to the proposal willingly, probably reflecting that his wife, as the consort of a Prussian prince, would be more useful to him, than as simply his own. At the same time he showed an amount of feeling, or pride, which raises him a little in our estimation. He consented, but put before his wife the bitter loss and estrangement it would be to himself. Madame Récamier felt that this letter was not a complete concession, yet she would have thrown over her husband had it been judicious. The offer of the prince was made in the heat of admiration, but in his cooler moments he saw what a fool he should appear in Prussia if he married the ex-wife of a Paris

banker. He did not press the matter further, and Madame Récamier did not press a divorce, for which there was no ground but ambition. She returned in the autumn to Paris, and as she could not give the prince herself, she sent him her portrait by Gérard, to which we have already alluded.

Whatever we may feel towards Madame Récamier, we cannot deny that in this affair she comes before us in a very worldly light. She was to annul her marriage, which her religion proclaimed indissoluble; she was to wed a Protestant, which her Church, if it did not forbid, at least highly disapproved; and all for the sake of the title and position of princess. Nay more, the fact that she offered to do so within a few months of her husband's failure gives the affair a still more interested colouring; and the age of the young man—a boy compared to herself—completes its disgraceful character. The only thing we can say for her after regarding these considerations, is, that she herself seemed ashamed of what she was doing, and did not proceed further than making the proposal. She returned to Paris, however, without setting the young prince free, and perhaps had not yet made up her mind to relinquish him. They corresponded for some time in a manner which proves that the prince was afraid of his offer to Madame Récamier becoming known; and for four years she kept him in suspense. Many propositions to meet on the frontier were made, but the prince was, or pretended to be, always prevented from carrying out his plans, until in 1811, an appointment was made for Schaffhausen: the prince went; the lady set out, but a blow came to prevent her arrival at the place of rendezvous, a sentence of exile being pronounced against her.

To conclude here this somewhat disgraceful episode: the prince again met Madame Récamier at Paris in 1815, entering with the allied armies, and he saw her for the last time in 1825 at the Abbaye-aux-Bois.

From 1808 the life of Madame Récamier is intimately mixed up with that of Madame de Staël; the first beauty, with the first wit, of Paris. With the life of Madame de Staël during this period we are not now occupied; but we find her friend often with her at Coppet, consoling her in her exile, and taking

part in the amusements with which she beguiled it. Thus in 1809 Madame Récamier joined the private theatricals at Coppet, and in Racine's 'Phèdre' took the part of Aricie. In the following year, Madame de Staël was installed in a house near Blois, lent to her by M. de Salaberry, and here her friend joined her again. The house had long been deserted, and the peasants were amazed to hear a sound of much music within its old walls. Madame de Staël's daughter was playing the harp, her music-master the guitar, and Madame Récamier singing very prettily to this accompaniment. The astonished clods surrounded the house, and listened quite bewitched. The account of this residence is given at more length in the memoir of Madame de Staël.

About this time, it is worth noticing, Madame Récamier, childless and almost, one may say, husbandless, adopted the biographer, whose memoirs of her have recently appeared, Madame Le Normant. She was her niece, the daughter of M. de Cyvoct, and she remained with her for many years till the period of her marriage. Her husband M. Charles Le Normant, lately dead, was then the curator of the coins and medals, including the cameos, which are preserved at the Bibliothèque Impériale at Paris. M. Le Normant had an apartment attached to this great library, where his wife received, at one time, the first literary society of Paris. The son of this couple, M. François Le Normant, is already coming before the world as an antiquary, although quite a young man.

However peaceful may have been the life which Madame Récamier, now a woman of three-and-thirty, and though not at all too old to flirt, thrown out of the sphere of coquetry by the failure of flirtation, proposed to herself, it was interrupted by the ridiculous cowardice of a man who has been represented as the most courageous of the whole Christian era. Napoleon was not only not secure upon his usurped throne, but feeling that the friends of liberty were naturally his enemies, imagined himself surrounded by foes who really cared little or nothing for him. The same cowardice which he had shown first in the banishment of Madame de Staël, then in the murder—for it was nothing else—of the poor little Duc d'Enghien, now displayed

itself in two other orders of exile. It was not sufficient to proscribe the authoress of 'L'Allemagne;' her very visitors must be put under a ban. Matthieu de Montmorency, her most attached friend, received his order of exile after paying a short visit to Coppet; and Madame Récamier, who stayed there a single night on her way to Aix in Savoy, where she was to drink the waters, was soon after commanded not to return to Paris. Perhaps the cruellest feature of these measures was, that the banishment was *not* from France. It was limited to a circle of a hundred miles round Paris. Any one who knows what a Frenchwoman is, and how Paris is her world, without which the rest of France is only a huge void, will understand that such a sentence was worse, to one like Madame Récamier, than complete exile. Privately we may entertain the idea—which may also have been Napoleon's—that a forced residence in the provinces would be good for the character of a thorough Parisienne; but there was no doubt an intentional cruelty and unworthy spite in the emperor in pronouncing such a sentence. To understand this, we must remember that under a despotic government the friend of an exile becomes as criminal as the exile himself; and Madame Récamier was by this decree cut off from all her ties, except those with persons as unfortunate as herself.

She was for some time destined to a hôtel life, that most uncomfortable of existences. Her first residence was at the *Pomme d'Or* at Chalons. In 1812 she repaired to Lyons, where she found the Duchesse de Chevreuse, an old acquaintance, in the same position as herself; and here she formed a friendship which lasted for many years. M. Ballanche was the son of a printer of Lyons. She had visited his father's press with the Duchesse de Luynes, an eccentric, clever woman, who preferred male to female attire, and had a private press of her own. On this occasion, the duchesse, while passing through the compositors' room at the Ballanches', set herself quietly at a case, tucked up her dress—she was that day, for a change, in women's clothes—and with astonishing quickness, imitating even the movement or body peculiar to compositors, set up the type for a whole page.

Ballanche was a philosopher as well as a printer. Few men could rival him in ugliness, which, however, was the work of accident rather than nature. A portion of his jaw, attacked by disease, had been removed, and one cheek was thus, as it were, wanting. His profile remained handsome, but the face was horrible to look at. He was presented to Madame Récamier by Camille Jordan, and at his first visit his boots, from some unexplained cause, had as disagreeable a smell about them as those of Sir Roger Williams, to whom Queen Elizabeth, with more sincerity than politeness, exclaimed, 'Williams, how your boots stink!' 'Tut, madam,' replied the Welshman, who was presenting an unfavoured petition, 'tis my *suit*, not my boots, that stinketh.' However, Madame Récamier, though better bred than the English sovereign, could not bear the noxious odour, and allowed the worthy printer to perceive the cause of her nausea. He behaved very charmingly on the occasion. Instead of retiring offended, he went into the hall, took off his boots, and returned without them. Unhappily some visitors arrived soon after, and M. Ballanche had to explain with some nervousness the cause of this peculiar and rather suspicious appearance.

During her residence at Lyons, Madame Récamier received much company of every kind. As an instance of this, we have an anecdote of Talma, the actor, and the Bishop of Troyes, whom fate one day brought together unexpectedly at her table. The bishop was too much a man of the world to be shocked at meeting a dignitary of the stage—that counterpart, let us not say parody, of the pulpit. Talma was introduced to him, an acquaintance struck up, and the bishop induced to recite a part of one of his sermons. 'Good! good!' cried the actor, touching him lightly on the chest: 'good down to here! But how about your legs?' It was evident the bishop had acted only in the pulpit.

In 1813, Madame Récamier, accompanied by her little niece, then seven years old, left Lyons for Rome. Here she took an apartment, determined to reside in the Holy City for some time. One of the first visits she made was to the studio of Canova. In a series of rooms the great sculptor had his works displayed

as they were finished, and the public was admitted to look at them. He himself worked away in a separate room, and thus insured peace and freedom from interruption. Madame Récamier, always a flirt, was not satisfied with the works; she wanted to see, and, perhaps, to impress, the workman, and therefore sent in her name. Canova came out in his working dress, holding his paper cap in his hand, and very gracefully invited her into his own studio, where she found his younger brother, the Abbé Canova, who was so devoted to him, that he followed him about like his shadow. Canova's was a charming character. Gay, simple, easily pleased, but fonder of peace and quiet than of society, he spent his great wealth, not in tawdry show and splendour, but in assisting fellow-sculptors and doing kindnesses to poor authors. The acquaintance thus formed with Madame Récamier ripened into friendship. He passed most of his evenings at her house, and was not insensible to the charm of her beauty. When the summer heats drove her from Rome, the sculptor offered her the loan of his *locanda* at Albano, an offer she readily accepted. In this lovely spot, with the beautiful lake on one side and a view of the sea on the other, the ex-leader of fashion was quite happy with no more company than that of her niece. As an instance of her good nature, we may mention that on one occasion, when an Italian fisherman was brought in by the French, being accused of giving information to the English, and was condemned to be shot the next morning, Madame Récamier, on hearing of it, and seeing the fearful state of terror in which the poor wretch was, at once took post to Rome, and went round to the chief French authorities to implore them to let the man off. Her prayers, however, were unheeded, and the fisherman was shot. Up to the last moment he had hoped, turning his bandaged eyes in the direction of Rome, and expecting to hear the sweet voice of the *Signora Francese* returning with his pardon.

In December, 1813, Madame Récamier left Rome for Naples. By way of escort, she had Sir J. Coghill, the well-known antiquary, who was travelling in Italy in quest of Etruscan vases and ancient inscriptions. The Englishman was in his own carriage in front, and with true British imperiousness managed to

secure the post-horses, which had been retained for some great unknown personage who was to arrive that evening. In this manner they reached Terracina early, but had not been there long when Madame Récamier heard in the court-yard a loud, indignant voice exclaiming, 'Where are the rascals who have robbed me of my post-horses from Rome to here?' She recognised the voice, put her head out of the window, and cried, 'Here they are; I am the culprit.' It was Fouché, the Minister of Police, who was travelling in all possible haste to Naples on a political errand to Murat. But Fouché was too much of the policeman to be joked, and took the occasion to warn Madame Récamier against going to Naples.

At this period Murat was assailed by English and Austrians to join the coalition against Napoleon. The insults with which the upstart had treated him, an upstart of his own creation, and the fear which the worthy—somewhat vulgar—man had of being drawn into the ruin of the emperor, which he saw plainly enough as every one did, was imminent, induced him to accept the English proposition and sign the coalition. A very French scene took place on this occasion. Madame Récamier happened to be with Caroline Murat, the Queen of Naples, when her husband entered in great agitation, and asked their old friend—for Madame Récamier had known the Murats well for some years—what course she advised. 'Sire,' she answered, 'you are a Frenchman. To France you must be true.' Murat, who had not the sense—he had never much sense—to see that he might be true to France, though false to the emperor, exclaimed, 'I am a traitor!' opened a window, walked out upon the balcony, pointed to Madame Récamier, the English fleet sailing calmly and gradually into the Bay of Naples, and then laid his face in his hands and sobbed. If this story be true—and Madame Le Normant is the best authority we can have—we do not wonder that those who remembered the weak, stout, good-natured Murats, as the writer remembers their children, should have cared little to set them up in the place of Bomba, who, with all his faults, had the dignity of a sovereign.

But to return to Rome and the Canovas, as Madame Récamier did in the spring: the sculptor invited her to come and see the

works he had commenced in her absence. She went with pleasure, but was surprised to find little or nothing new, and certainly nothing worth coming to see. At last he brought her to his private room, made her sit down, and then, with his brother, drew aside a green curtain at the end of the room, and displayed to her sight two busts, both modelled after her likeness.

'See whether I have been thinking of you,' cried the enthusiastic sculptor, in Italian, delighted with his long-concocted surprise. But he was destined to be disappointed by the vain Frenchwoman. Even the beautiful work of Canova was not good enough for her. She was so annoyed at the truthfulness of the portraits—doubtless imagining herself to be much lover—liar—that she could not conceal her feelings even before the admiring artist. He dropped back the curtain, and said no more about the busts. Soon after, one of them, done in marble, was displayed in his rooms, crowned with bays, and entitled 'Beatrice.' After Canova's death, his brother sent it to Madame Récamier, with the quotation from Dante:—

'Sovra candido vel, cinta d'oliva
Donna m'apparve.'

To which was added: 'Ritratto di Giulietta Récamier, modelato di memoria de Canova nel 1813, e poi consacrato in marmo col nome di Beatrice.' Perhaps this incident is even less in Madame Récamier's favour than her flirtation with Prince August. Worldliness was natural, and a part of her education almost; but as a lovely woman, she ought to have known that personal vanity half destroys the charm of beauty.

However, 1814 brought a change of affairs. Napoleon fell, and France was free again. The exiles everywhere hastened to Paris, and Madame Récamier found herself once more in the midst of the De Staëls, Montmorencys, &c., and resumed at last, after an absence of three years, her character of a Queen of Society. It is amusing to see how the weak now exulted after the fall of the strong man who had kept them in awe. Nothing was good enough for these poor restored exiles. Paris, France itself, was theirs. They had been kept out of their own; they re-entered their possessions triumphantly; and so rejoiced were they at the ruin of their oppressor, that they re-

ceived with glee and open arms the enemy against whom they had so long inveighed. With the De Staëls and Récamiers, the English were the mode, and Wellington the hero of the day. Madame Récamier, returned to flirtation as well as to wealth—for her husband had gradually recovered from his failure in the interval—determined to add the hero of a hundred fights to the number of her slaves. In a sketch which she wrote out for a long memoir of these glorious days, we find Wellington *facile princeps* in her heart, and, if we may credit her, quite in love with this woman of seven-and-thirty. Here is a specimen of her flirtation given by herself in these notes: ‘Dinner at the Queen of Sweden’s, with her and the Duke of Wellington, whom I met again. His coldness to me; his attention to the young Englishwoman. I am seated at dinner between him and the Duc de Broglie. He is glum at the beginning of the dinner, but revives and ends by being very agreeable. I notice the displeasure of the young Englishwoman opposite to us, and cease talking to him and devote myself entirely to the Duc de Broglie.’

What magnanimity, and what vanity! On the morrow of Waterloo, the duke, still her captive, repairs to her apartment. Between patriotism and coquetry, she is confused. The duke mistakes her emotion for joy at the downfall of Napoleon, and exclaims: *Je l’ai bien battu.* After this, Madame Récamier—to believe her biographer—shut her doors against the duke in disgust.

These pretty stories—sure to find favour with the French—may or may not be true. The Duke of Wellington, great man as he was, was far from immaculate. At any rate the following note, in bad French, is quite characteristic, and according to Madame Le Normant, is only one of a number he sent to her, ‘all alike.’

‘*Paris, le 20 Octobre, 1814.*

‘J’étais tout hier à la chasse, Madame, et je n’ai reçu votre billet et les livres qu’à la nuit, quand c’était trop tard pour vous répondre. J’espérais que mon jugement serait guidé par le votre dans ma lecture des lettres de Mademoiselle.

Espinasse, et je desespère de pouvoir le former moi-même. Je vous suis bien obligé pour *la pamphlète* de Madame de Staël.

‘Votre très obéissant et *fidel* serviteur,

‘WELLINGTON.’

But dukes and princes were nothing to the beautiful banker's wife ; and during the winter of 1814 we find her intimate with half-queens and ex-empresses ; in other words, Hortense, Joséphine, and Caroline Murat. She added now to the list of her slaves that weak, bombastic weathercock Benjamin Constant, who was among those who triumphed most loudly over the downfall of the despot, and who, when he started up from Elba to flash gloriously over France and Europe for a moment, was one of the first to lick the dust before him. The return of the bugbear, sudden and triumphant, scattered the exulting exiles with their tails between their legs. There was a rush and escape from Paris, like that of naughty schoolboys when the master's step is heard in the passage returning to the school-room. The generals whom Napoleon had crowned—the greatest mistake in his policy—and who had turned against him in the hour of need—as, of course they would, and as he ought to have foreseen—ran off helter-skelter to be out of the way of his re-risen wrath. Murat, always a coward, turned round once more, and left Naples to return only to meet a just fate, the proper death of a turncoat. There was a general end of these half-kings, and Wellington had the honour, not only of capturing the ringleader of the band of housebreakers, but of throwing down almost all the thrones his accomplices had so pleasantly enjoyed for a time. It was amusing to see these mushroom-monarchs retire to private life in America or England, and drop the ‘King’ for the ‘Mr.’

Madame Récamier was among the few of the returned exiles who remained in Paris, and had now to mix in a yet more curious society than any of which she had had experience. Madame Krüdner, at that time the keeper of the Emperor Alexander's conscience, and a very remarkable woman, was much sought after by the gayest Parisians from a knowledge of the influence she possessed over the emperor, who visited her in

cognito for the purpose of conversing on religious subjects. She opened her parties with prayer; and it was remarkable to see the courtiers, who flocked there either from curiosity or interest, fall on their knees while the hostess herself extemporized the prayer. Among the number was even Constant, who believed in nothing, not even in himself, though perhaps there was some excuse for that, as nobody else believed in him either. He admitted that he felt himself an arch hypocrite when he knelt on these occasions.

In Paris Madame Récamier now saw most of her old friends reassemble; but the most intimate of them, Madame de Staël, returned from Italy only to die. Her friend's grief was great, but even by the side of her death-bed, she was able to form another friendship with a person no less distinguished—Chateaubriand.

Sir James Mackintosh, who a year previously met the author of 'Le Génie du Christianisme,' at Paris, and who, by the way, says of Madame Récamier, that she was still very pretty at that period, and had pleasing manners, and describes her coming into a party followed by two or three adorers, says of him: 'He is a mild and somewhat melancholy person, and more interesting than his works.' He was at this time about middle-aged, still handsome, and very attractive in his gentle, delicate manners. His travels had given him a far more extended knowledge of the world than most Frenchmen possess, and increased the natural liberality of his sentiments. He was free from the narrowness of French prejudices against England; and when Mackintosh was about to leave Paris for this country, told him to carry with him his prayers '*pour toute sorte de prospérité pour la vieille Angleterre,*' whereof the idea was Chateaubriand's but the French probably Sir James's. But Chateaubriand was a man who aspired to more than he gained: he was not satisfied with his own aspirations. A disappointment which came from within rather than from external circumstances—over which a truly great man can rise indifferent—left him morbid and bitter. His friendship with Madame Récamier was, as he confesses, a relief to his spirits. She seems to have understood this melancholy man more than the world

did. She cheered him, not, perhaps, entering so much into his feelings, as flattering imperceptibly his vanity, which was naturally soothed by the friendship of a beautiful woman, who had been such a star in the world of society. Often, indeed, the recluse, the bitter philosopher, verging on misanthropy, is drawn back to the world—at least to humanity—by the delicate allurements of a mere flirt. Madame Récamier was little more. She was not a woman of profound mind. Her companionship with thinkers like Ballanche and Chateaubriand was not spiritual, or metaphysical, or philosophic, or speculative : such men did not want such companionship. They had run into superhumanity (if the term be permitted), and they wanted more humanity. They found it in its pleasantest, least offensive, most attractive form in this amiable, agreeable, pretty woman, who had lived to enjoy life, and enjoyed, and even prized it still. Madame Récamier won back these morbid thinkers by the strength of her very reality. She was their medium between a world '*d'outre tombe*,' and a living world, to which they felt, or professed, such hostility. Far from angelic, she was a kind of angel to them, who was able to throw a halo of common beauty over the world they detested. The fact that she was a woman, still beautiful, still gay, still full of life, gave her this power. In this respect a woman, however commonplace, is more than a poet, and Madame Récamier was, though a flirt, not commonplace.

In 1819, the husband of Madame Récamier—for among these numerous flirtations we no longer think of M. Récamier himself—experienced fresh losses. An English wife might now have devoted herself, and sacrificed her love of gaiety, to the consolation of her unfortunate spouse. Madame Récamier was a Frenchwoman, her place was in society, and to that she must be true. She took the other alternative, and securing for herself a portion of the fortune which her husband had dissipated in fruitless speculations, separated from him and took a small apartment in the Convent of L'Abbaye-aux-Bois, in the Rue de Sèvres. Her room was almost as poor as the cell of a real nun ; but here she received the whole world of Paris, and the receptions at the Abbaye-aux-Bois became celebrated.

Chateaubriand has described her apartment in his 'Mémoires d'Outre Tombe,' and this retreat has since been raised to a level with that of St. Joseph, where Madame de Montespan retired, and where Madame du Deffand held a long rule; but at the period at which Madame Récamier took up her lodging there, it was so little known, that Madame Moreau, who was asked by her to dinner, thought it necessary to set off an hour before in order to accomplish the journey. Hither Chateaubriand came day after day, and here were found the old friends, the Montmorencys, Simonard, Ballanche, and a mass of acquaintance, among whom were the Duchess of Devonshire, the Earl of Bristol, the Duke of Hamilton, Sir Humphry and Lady Davy, Maria Edgeworth, and Alexander von Humboldt, as foreigners; Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, and, later, Villemain, Montalembert, Tocqueville, Guizot, Thierry, Sainte-Beuve, and Prosper Mérimée. Surely Madame Récamier's fame must have reached a great height when men of such different colours and principles could crowd together in her little room. Here, too, Delphine Gay, as a young girl, made her début in reciting a poem of her own, which was afterwards crowned by the Academy. M. Ampère, the younger, then one-and-twenty, was introduced to Madame Récamier, and afterwards became an *ami de la maison*; and Miss Berry, more celebrated as the friend of Horace Walpole's old age than for her talents as an authoress, made a ludicrous and rather awkward mistake about the Queen of Sweden, of whom she related an anecdote in her very presence.

Thus we see that Madame Récamier's society at this period was composed as much of literary and political celebrities, French and foreign, as of the merely fashionable people of Paris. To collect them, and still more to keep them, she must have had something more than her reputation for beauty, which was now declining, for she was forty-three years of age. We hear little of her own wit, amid anecdotes of that of her friends, and her fortune was too much reduced to make that her attraction. The secret lay probably in that charm of manner, that perfect ease and grace in conversation, matured in some five-and-twenty years of continual good society, and that

sympathy for the opinions and feelings of others, which brought her so many friends, even among men and women vastly superior to her in intellect.

The attraction she possessed for these friends, and which she heightened by a certain show of *affection*, which, as a flirt, she did not hesitate to offer, was so strong that all her friendships, innocent in other respects, took the form of love-affairs. In England she will not be acquitted of infidelity to a husband still living, and from whom she had separated herself in his misfortunes, simply because these *liaisons* did not extend to criminality; nor can we, as doubtless the French can, read without disgust the passionate letters of Chateaubriand, a married and middle-aged man, to Madame Récamier, a married and middle-aged woman. We may well wonder, too, that people, keenly alive to the ridiculous in others, should have seen nothing ludicrous in their expressions of devotion. Thus, in November, 1820, Chateaubriand is sent on a diplomatic mission to Berlin. He wishes to throw it up because it will separate him from Madame Récamier. He writes, '*Je ne vis que quand je crois que je ne vous quitterai de ma vie.*' Again: 'I fear I shall not be able to see you at half-past five, and yet I have but this happiness in the whole world.' 'I shall pass my life near you in loving you.' 'You only fill my whole life.' When he is gone, she writes him part of her letter in invisible ink, which becomes legible on being held to the fire. Was this a political or an amatory precaution? He writes like a young lover mourning over his separation. He throws out hints of positive jealousy of Matthieu de Montmorency, and is in raptures when he obtains leave to return. With all allowance for Gallic ardour of expression, we cannot think that these letters are merely the outpourings of a platonic attachment; and as in after years Chateaubriand declared roundly his devotion to Madame Récamier, we cannot, at least in England, acquit him of having, as a married man, made love to a married woman. Knowing, too, Madame Récamier's confessed coquetry, we cannot acquit her, on the other hand, of having encouraged him.

Chateaubriand returned after a few months' absence, but in

the following April had again to quit her, being sent on an embassy to England, the country 'where,' he says, 'I was so unhappy and so young.' Here he wrote to his idol three or four times a week and much in the same strain; but Madame Récamier, true to her character of flirt, appears in his absence to have encouraged his rival, Matthieu de Montmorency—a far better friend for her in every way—and to have replied rarely enough to these effusions.

We have, however, no need to be surprised that Chateaubriand should have expressed more than a platonic affection for Madame Récamier. He had once before, if not oftener, forsaken his wife, and on one occasion with so much dishonour that we cannot omit the story which Madame Récamier gives in full, and the first part of which Chateaubriand unblushingly relates in the '*Mémoires d'outre Tombe*.'

Four-and-twenty years before the embassy to England, Chateaubriand, an exile, an orphan, and almost penniless, had found in this country sympathizing and benevolent friends, among whom was the Rev. Mr. Ives of Bungay, in Suffolk. This gentleman had a daughter, a beautiful charming girl, or fifteen, whose modesty must have contrasted powerfully with the prudery and coquetry of the émigré's country-women. Chateaubriand fell in love with her. He was handsome, clever, and even fascinating. The poor girl gave him her whole heart frankly; and he was dishonourable enough to encourage her attachment; in short, to amuse himself at her expense. Her parents saw how the matter was. The young man was about to leave them, and they feared for their child's heart. With much frankness and delicacy—to which he has, in his '*Mémoires*,' given a ridiculous turn—Mrs. Ives, on the eve of his departure, offered the young exile, whose position, she thought, made him too timid to come forward himself, the hand of her daughter, and a home under their own roof. Nothing could have been more disinterested.

'I fell on my knees,' he writes, 'and covered her hands with kisses and tears. She thought I was weeping from joy, and sobbed with pleasure. She put out her hand to ring the bell,

and called her husband and her daughter. "Stop," I cried, "I am married!" She fell in a swoon.'

Time did not efface from the poor victim's heart the memory of her first love, and we can imagine the agony which his cruelty brought into this kind English family that had so warmly sheltered him. Many years passed, and Charlotte Ives accepted at last the hand of a naval officer, who in due time rose to the rank of admiral. When Chateaubriand, now a famous author and ambassador, returned to England four-and-twenty years later, he met Charlotte again, as the wife of Admiral Sutton and mother of two fine young men, who had to be put forward in the world. Chateaubriand offered her his aid, and she accepted it in favour of her sons. She wrote to him two letters, asking him to exert his interest for them, and full of dignity and modesty, yet betraying the depth of a feeling which she had never been able to conquer. She concludes the last with these words:—

'But I will not presume further to detain your attention. Let it be permitted me only to say, my lord, that feelings too keen to be controlled rendered the first few minutes I passed under your roof most acutely painful. The events of seven-and-twenty previous years all rushed to my recollection; from the early period when you crossed my path like a meteor, to leave me in darkness when you disappeared, to that inexpressibly bitter moment when I stood in your house an uninvited stranger, and in a character as new to myself as perhaps unwelcome to you.'

Madame Récamier now held a proud political position. Her best friend, Matthieu de Montmorency, was minister for foreign affairs, and Chateaubriand ambassador at London. The main ambition of the latter was to be nominated for the Congress of 1822, and it was through Madame Récamier that he pushed his claims. His frequent letters are uninteresting, full of himself, of vanity, and ambition; but they give clear indications of the influence which Madame Récamier possessed at this period. She succeeded in obtaining his wish for him, though not in the manner he desired it; for the two rivals both went to Congress, and Chateaubriand naturally had to take the second place.

However, he agreed wonderfully with Montmorency until their return from Paris, where, as there was no longer work for two in the government, it devolved on one or other to give up his ambitious prospects. The rivals were not pitted only in the arena of love, or friendship, whichever you choose to consider it; they were divided in politics, yet by so slight a shade of opinion, as made them far more bitter foes than direct opponents would have been. The one, a Revolutionist at heart, was a Royalist by tradition, and out of the two had grown into a Liberal Royalist; the other, whom tradition attached to the *ancien régime*, while ambition induced him to put up with a constitution, was still a Conservative Royalist. The king naturally favoured the latter; and thus, when the opportunity presented itself, and Matthieu de Montmorency, the Liberal, was compelled to retire, Chateaubriand, the Conservative, was at once invited to accept the vacant portfolio. According to his own account, he refused it again and again till forced to take it; but, however this may be, we can understand that this measure would have raised up a bitter feeling between the two men. Montmorency, indeed, was too good a man to indulge this sentiment; but, as we always hate more those we have injured than those who injure us, Chateaubriand could no longer bear the man over whom he had triumphed.

Let us leave these great-little men to their jealousies, and return to their common idol. In 1823, the health of her niece had become so delicate that the doctors advised for her a warmer climate, and Madame Récamier set out for Italy.

It is a curious phase in the history of this flirt, that the older she grew, the more devoted became her adorers. She had the uncommon art, too, of keeping, as well as making them. A Frenchman generally loves more with his mind than with his eyes, and the dignity of his attachment seems to be enhanced by the age of its object. At any rate Madame Récamier may have now made the consoling reflection, that the admirers of her middle age—for she was now six-and-forty—were men of a far superior stamp to those of her youth. The Bonapartes and German princes, who had been enslaved by her beauty, were inferior to the great thinkers who now surrounded her. There

was youth and poetry in the person of the young Ampère ; philosophy in that of quaint, simple, awkward, but good-hearted Ballanche ; power and religion united in the graceful Montmorency ; and ambition and fame in vain, morbid, melancholy Chateaubriand.

The first two accompanied her to Italy, the third was soon to join her there, and Chateaubriand would certainly have gone, if ambition had allowed him to do so. Thus we see that Madame Récamier, no longer young, no longer very beautiful, had the art of disposing of the fates of her adorers.

At Rome Madame Récamier took a position only second to that she held in Paris. The Duchess of Devonshire, with whom she was intimate, was the leader of society in the Holy City, and, endowed with fine tastes and high accomplishments, had surrounded herself with the celebrated painters and sculptors of all nations then in Italy. Into this society Madame Récamier entered enthusiastically, and assembled its members in her own salon. But death broke up these circles. The Duchess of Devonshire was no longer a young woman ; the death of her most intimate friend, the Cardinal Gonsalvi, overwhelmed her, and in the following year, 1824, she succumbed.

Madame Récamier, now that her chief attraction was gone, left Rome for Naples. At the former place, however, she had renewed a forgotten acquaintance of early days. Rome was full of a wretched, shabby herd of ex-kings and ex-queens of the empire, and their hangers-on. Among these were Lucien, her old admirer ; Jerome, ex-king of Westphalia ; and Queen Hortense. Sedulously avoided by all the other French in Rome, they dragged on a wretched existence, very different to their former mushroom grandeur, content with less ambitious titles than 'king and queen,' and truly grateful to anybody who would notice them. Madame Récamier met Hortense, then called 'Duchesse de St. Leu,' at St. Peter's, and though she would not openly renew her acquaintance with her, she condescended to meet the 'queen' from time to time in her rambles among the ruins. It was on one of these occasions that Hortense entered into a long explanation of her own conduct in accepting the title of Duchesse de St. Leu from the Royalists,

while Napoleon was, as she thought, secure for life at Elba. The prisoner, however, escaped, and turned up at Paris to vent his wrath on the heads of his apostate family. He sent for his sister-in-law, and demanded what she meant by accepting a title, from his enemies. Hortense, terrified by his sternness, explained that she had done so out of consideration for her children. The emperor, pacing the room, sternly spoke of the law, and seemed to enjoy the terror he inspired. The queen pleaded her feelings as a mother, following him about with supplication. 'Then,' replied the emperor, severely, 'they should have told you, madame, that when one has shared the prosperity of a family, one must know how to bear its reverses.' Unconsciously he had approached the window of the Tuileries, followed by his step-daughter, who had burst into tears. An immense mob had assembled in the court, watching for him, and a grand shout of welcome greeted the returned prisoner. Napoleon bowed quietly; but the queen had also been seen, and the papers of the day, in relating the appearance of the emperor at the window, added, that the applause of the multitude had so affected Hortense that she had shed tears.

The death of the Duchess of Devonshire was not the only blow to Madame Récamier at this period. Chateaubriand, for whom, doubtless, she felt more than for any of her devoted friends, was dismissed from office without a word of explanation. True to his character, ambitious and vain, he was not content to retire with dignity, but commenced in his own paper, the '*Journal des Débats*,' a series of attacks upon the government he had recently belonged to, the untempered bitterness of which proved, beyond doubt, that it was Chateaubriand, not France, he desired to advance, and gave the true measure to his professed patriotism.

From Naples, Madame Récamier returned to Rome, where she passed the winter of 1824-25. Thence she again proceeded to Naples, accompanied by her friends, to the number of whom was now added M. Charles Le Normant, who afterwards married her niece. At last, in May, 1825, she returned to Paris, after an absence of eighteen months. She now occupied again her little room at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, and once more received

the chief society of Paris. Her visitors were mostly the same, and, of course, the devoted Chateaubriand was constantly there. His rival, Matthieu, did not long trouble him. On Good Friday, 1825, death removed him for ever. He died while praying in the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas, at Paris.

From a French point of view, Matthieu de Montmorency was little less than a saint. He had passed his later years in a strict observance of the rites and ceremonies of his Church, and the practice of active charity. He had attempted, and not in vain, to exercise a proper influence over the minds of his friends. To him it is probably owing that Madame Récamier, though a flirt, has never been proved to be worse. His friendship was her safeguard. But what shall we say of a man who, professing all this religion, and probably feeling it, can separate himself from a wife 'whose piety and virtues rendered her worthy of his respect;' and only resume his connection with her when a series of deaths in his family made it probable that the great name of Montmorency would become extinct, unless he had an heir to hold it? Making due allowance for a difference of ideas on the subject of marriage, we cannot accord to Matthieu de Montmorency, who passed his life away from his wedded wife and in the continual company of the wife of another man, the crown of a saint.

On the death of his rival, Chateaubriand *composed* a prayer for a dead friend, for the use of Madame Récamier, full of French sentiment: this prayer, which he probably did not even *feel*, gives the measure of the religion of the author of the 'Génie du Christianisme.' If we do not here give a translation of it, it is because a prayer has always seemed to us too private and sacred an outpouring of the heart to be printed amongst mere worldly thoughts. Suffice it to say, that it raises worldly friendship to the level of our love to God, or even above it!

During the next four years, Madame Récamier continued to inhabit the little room in the convent, and passed much the same life as hitherto. No particular events are recorded during this period, but the death of her father, M. Bernard, and the departure of Chateaubriand to Rome, where he was named

ambassador, and where he remained from September, 1828, till May, 1829, when he returned to Paris.

In 1830, M. Récamier, who had long been a cipher in the life of his wife, and had, in spite of all his troubles, reached the ripe age of eighty, had the good taste to die. We read a great deal in Madame Récamier's life of her desolation at the loss of her friends, Madame de Staël and Matthieu de Montmorency, but we find no expressions of grief at the death of her husband. This is at least consistent. Her friends took little notice of this trifling affair, and she had probably too long forgotten that she was married at all, to care for the freedom that her husband's death gave her.

Whatever she may have thought, more important events happened to drive it out of her mind. In July, 1830, came the second great revolution that Madame Récamier was to witness. She was at Dieppe at the time, but returned to Paris while the streets were full of barricades. With it fell the friends of Madame Récamier. A Legitimist movement took place in La Vendée, and Chateaubriand and other royalist chiefs were arrested. In the following year the cholera broke out in Paris, and Madame Récamier, to avoid it, fled to Switzerland, there to join Chateaubriand, who had gone thither on being set at liberty. Here she visited the Queen Hortense at Arenenberg, and made the acquaintance of that taciturn son, who even at home assumed, as of right, the airs of a prince, and who is now on the throne of France. In 1833 she took up her residence at Passy, and was again surrounded by her usual coterie.

For the next five years her life presents little incident, and was chiefly passed in Paris. At the Abbaye-aux-Bois she extended the circle of her acquaintance, which was now chiefly literary and *dilettante*. Among the men of celebrity who were frequent in their visits to her little room, are several whose names are well known in England—Alexis de Tocqueville, Louis de Loménie, Sainte-Beuve, and so forth. Chateaubriand was always there, and always devoted to her. He had finally given up politics, and was employed in literature alone.

In 1840, Madame Récamier's health obliged her to leave Paris for Ems. On her return, Louis Napoleon was being tried

for his ridiculous attempt at Strasburg, and Madame Récamier was examined as a witness. She was afterwards permitted to visit him at the Conciergerie. Two years later he wrote to thank her for this visit; and it is strange to find this ape of his uncle writing in terms of the politest regard to this woman, whom thirty years before his predecessor had exiled as a nuisance. As a proof of Madame Récamier's celebrity at this period, we may cite the *soirée* she gave by subscription for the sufferers by the inundations at Lyons. The tickets were nominally sold at twenty francs, but as much as a hundred was readily given for the opportunity of seeing this famous leader of society in her 'cellule' at the Abbaye-aux-Bois. The sale realized no less than four thousand three hundred and ninety francs. Rachel, Viardot-Garcia, Rubini, and Leblache sang or recited gratuitously, and the rooms were crowded to overflowing with the *élite* of Paris, including most of the ambassadors.

Madame Récamier has an especial title to be called a 'Queen of Society.' She lived in it and for it to the last. In 1845 she lost the use of her eyes by cataract, but still continued to receive, though not less than sixty-eight years of age. With the exception of short journeys into the country, she remained almost always at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, and her life became monotonous in its habits. Regularly every day at half-past two she received a visit from M. de Chateaubriand, in spite of his great age—he was nearly eighty, and in very bad health. After an hour's *tête-à-tête* between this aged but still devoted couple, visitors were admitted, among whom came regularly old M. Ballanche, now a distinguished member of the Institute; and from then till the hour of rest she lived for her friends. In the morning she had the newspapers and new books read to her, and took a short drive.

But one cannot live for ever; and one by one this circle of old friends dropped off to a world where society, good or bad, is of little account. Madame de Chateaubriand was the first to go, and worthy Ballanche followed in 1847. The lasting friendship of these people of a former age, nay, indeed, of a former century, would be very touching, if it had not wound up with a very ridiculous *pose*. His wife had been dead only a

1. The first group of students, consisting of 10 students, was assigned to the control group. They were given the same assignment as the other groups, but they were not allowed to use any external resources.



THE OFFER - CHATEAUBRIAND AND MADAME RÉCAMIER.

few months when Chateaubriand, verging on eighty, infirm, tottering, and with one foot in the grave, offered his hand, as he had long given his heart, to Madame Récamier, blind and verging on seventy. She had the good sense to refuse him; and the following year, in July, 1848, the grave closed upon him too. Madame Récamier attended by his bedside to the last, and her grief at his death was that of a widow rather than a friend.

Madame Récamier was left alone, the last of all her set. She had no further interest in life. A third great revolution was raging round her, who was a remnant of the first. The world was busy with new theories, new follies, new crimes. There remained nothing for her but to quit it. Yet she lingered on. In the house of her niece, this woman of society still received visits for a time, and still, perhaps, flirted with M. Ampère, the last and youngest of her adorers. But in 1849, the cholera, which in younger days she had fled from Paris to avoid, returned in terrible malignity. She was too old to escape now, and among the many victims of the scourge, this famous woman was counted on the 11th of May, 1849. It is said that after death her features assumed a peculiar beauty. Death, content, paid this little tribute to the body of a woman who had been the most celebrated beauty of her age.





LADY HERVEY.

A Clever Queen.—The Three Marys.—Lord Fanny.—The Maid of Honour Row.—A Female Cornet.—The Cur-Dog of Britain.—The Lady's Plaything.—The Prince's Guineas.—The Effeminate Hervey.—Secret Marriage.—Lord Bristol.—Hervey's Deism.—Life of a Maid of Honour.—A Contemplative Court.—Only a Cramp.—Modern 'Englishwomen.'—Lady Hervey's Letters.—A Gorgeous Welcome.—Lady Hervey's Trials.—Hervey the Hypochondriac.—A Vulgar Monarch.—The Last Miles of Life.—Lady Hervey's Widowhood.—Introduces New Fashions.—Walpole's Opinion of Her.—A Pleasing Portrait.

THE subject of this memoir is not held up as a model, nor exhibited as a warning. As a woman of the world, she cannot be esteemed an object for imitation. As one who, in the midst of great temptations, escaped great perils, she ought not to be pointed out as a delinquent. She was born in 1700, and was the daughter and heiress of Brigadier-General Nicholas Lepell, a name since restored, or corrupted, to Lepelley, one of those ancient native families of Sark, whose descent is unquestioned, whose pride is avowed, who are French in manner and in language, and English in their government.

Mary Lepell, afterwards Lady Hervey, being an only daughter, enjoyed all the advantages of education then bestowed on well-born and well-endowed young ladies, and on them only. She had for her marriage portion the whole of the little Channel Island of Sark; and no pains were spared to render her, what she afterwards became, 'a perfect model of the finely-polished, highly-bred, genuine woman of fashion.' Thus did Horace Walpole describe her.

As she grew up, and displayed not only considerable intelligence, but very great attractions of face and form, her father, in compliance with the received notions of the day, sent her to

court ; and at the age of fourteen, the age at which Sarah Duchess of Marlborough and her sister began their court life, she became maid of honour to Caroline, then Princess of Wales, and afterwards queen consort of George II.

Mary Lepell was, in some respects, eminently fortunate in the character of the princess whom she served. Queen Caroline had a masculine understanding, and, as Dr. Alured Clarke terms it, 'a large compass of thought.' Nevertheless, she had a lively imagination, and great vivacity, even wit. Her repartees were good, and she could take as well as give a joke. She had quite a royal memory ; such a memory as confers popularity on sovereigns ; such a memory as endowed George III. with the semblance of mind. She was an excellent historian of great and small matters ; knew the genealogy of most illustrious English families ; could bring at a moment's notice anecdotes to illustrate her point ; and she enjoyed also, what is so seldom enjoyed by royalty, invariably high spirits, which rendered her the life of her court circle, and drew out from her courtiers the best efforts of their wit and fancy, in which she greatly delighted.

To all these social qualities the queen added great penetration of character, and a most sympathetic, indulgent nature. She was charitable and kind in the extreme.

Still she was German, and, as such, was deficient in delicacy of feeling, and in nicety as to the morals of those around her. She had been accustomed also, from her youth, to the system of German courts, in which the queen tolerates the mistress, or even mistresses, of the reigning prince, and receives them in her court ; and hence the example set by Caroline tainted that region which had under Anne's rule, or, rather, under that of that fierce dragon of society, 'Queen Sarah,' attained to a perfection of decorum.

When Mary Lepell became maid of honour to this princess, there existed the usual animosity between the monarch and the heir-apparent which has marked the House of Hanover with littleness of character. The separation of parties was favourable to those who clustered round the Princess Caroline at

Richmond, where she then lived with her consort; for she could with safety avoid, and even discountenance the vulgar as well as immoral ladies of the court of George I.; adopt as her adviser and intimate friend the gay Sir Robert Walpole, whose boisterous and not very decorous mirth she learned to tolerate; and escape the petulance and arrogance of Sunderland, who played the first part at St. James's. She could also indulge in her taste for letters and for literary conversation, for which George I. had about as much fondness and capacity as he had delicacy or morality. She could talk divinity with Hoadley; sentiment with Lord Hervey; and of the world—the great world which he knew so well—with Chesterfield; and she could assemble around her beauties with minds, and delight in seeing them rise above the dull frivolities of an ordinary court.

Among the beauties of Richmond Palace, which the princess then inhabited, the three Marys carried away the meed of admiration—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Bellenden, and Mary Lepell.

All these three ladies of rank were distinguished not only for their beauty, but for their intelligence, their wit, and their *savoir faire*; a quality without which their wit would have been indiscreet, their beauty perilous, their intelligence pedantic.

Lady Mary stands at the head of this famous trio. She was very handsome, very lively, very quick, very well informed: but she wanted heart; and one great source of attraction to woman-kind was therefore deficient. Miss Bellenden was beautiful, gay, spirited, and so unspotted by a court as to marry a poor man, though addressed by half the fashionable fops of the day. Though of more decided beauty, she was deficient in the sound sense and cultivation of the third Mary, the lovely Mrs. Lepell, as she was styled. Those who looked only at the exterior admired Mary Bellenden the most of the three; those who sought underneath the exquisite graces of form and face for more valuable qualities, were entranced by the sweetness, the truth, the thoughtful mind, and real superiority of Mary Lepell. 'Her manners had,' says Lord Wharncliffe, 'a foreign tinge, which some called affected, but they were easy, gentle, and altogether exquisitely pleasing.' Her good sense was so prominent a rea-

ture of her character, that it became, as life went on, almost proverbial.

Like Sarah Jennings, Mary Lepell 'loved but once,' and married before the spring of her summer-like life was over. At court, when in waiting, she encountered, among other loungers, John, afterwards Lord Hervey, the second son of John, first Earl of Bristol, by Elizabeth Felton, his second wife. He had an elder brother, then alive,—Carr, Lord Hervey, a young man of great abilities, but of a most profligate life, and the reputed father, according to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, of Horace Walpole. There was a great eccentricity of character and manner in the Hervey family—witness the well-known division of mankind by Lady Mary into '*Men, women, and Herveys*!'—a race full of mental and personal peculiarities, which were not likely to be lessened by the marriage between the Earl of Bristol and Elizabeth Felton, who was more singular even than a 'Hervey.' John Hervey, the first and last object of Mary Lepell's affections, was educated at Westminster, and afterwards at Clare Hall, Cambridge, where he graduated (as a nobleman) in 1715. During the vacations, his father, wishing to make him a man of the world, used to take him to Newmarket, in order to give his delicate and somewhat effeminate son a taste for jockeyism and a love for manly pursuits; and it is said that 'Lord Fanny,' as he was afterwards called, actually undertook to ride a match, but the fears of his fond mother overruled the wishes of his father and his own, and the dear treasure was not allowed by Lady Bristol to run that risk. He grew up a valetudinarian; and all that a pious, intellectual, and sensible father could do to strengthen his mind and body was counteracted by a flighty, self-willed, and excitable mother. Only once was he let loose from what is metaphorically called 'her apron-string,' and that signal flight was merely to Hanover and back, to pay his respects to George I., then Elector of Hanover, as his brother Carr had done before him. Here he formed the acquaintance and gained the favour of Frederick Prince of Wales, a circumstance which decided the current of his after life.

He was now thrown on his own tastes for a pursuit, for his

father, Lord Bristol, opposed his entering the army, and literature or politics were the only other resources for a young man of family. He passed, however, much of his time at Richmond, whilst his mother, the countess, was in waiting on the Princess Caroline; and, doubtless, the old precincts, long known as Maid of Honour Row, often saw his elegant, handsome, but languid form pacing with the 'three Marys' in the shade of the old trees on Palace Green; whilst in the evening, chattering with Pope or with Chesterfield, the young man drank deeply of that potion, the ingredients of which were, in those days, scepticism and worldly knowledge, which were thought to compose the proper elixir for a young nobleman, to strengthen and prepare him for life.

Meantime, whilst the intimacy between him and Mary Lepell was thus ripening, such accusations as these were levelled against the fair maid of honour:—

'What I am going to say,' writes the Duchess of Marlborough, 'I am sure is as true as if I had been a transactor in it myself; and I will begin with the relation with Mr. Lepell, my Lord Fanny's wife's father, having made her a cornet in his regiment as soon as she was born, which is no more wrong to the design of a regiment than if she had been a son; and she was paid many years after she was a maid of honour.

'She was extreme forward and pert, and my Lord Sunderland got her a pension from George I., it being too ridiculous to continue her any longer an officer in the army. And into the bargain she was a spy; but what she could tell to deserve a pension I cannot comprehend. However, the king used to talk to her very much, and this encouraged my Lord Fanny and her to undertake a very extraordinary project. And she went to the drawing-room every night, and publicly attacked his Majesty in a most vehement manner, insomuch that it was the diversion of all the town, which alarmed the Duchess of Kendal and the ministry that governed her to that degree, lest the king should be put into the opposer's hands, that they determined to buy my Lady H—— off; and they gave her four thousand pounds to desist; which she did, and my Lord Fanny bought a good house with it, and furnished it well.'

This malicious effusion must, however, be taken with much reservation. Sir Robert Walpole was at that time an admirer of Lady Hervey's, and there existed not a human being whom in her later days the Duchess hated with more intensity than Sir Robert, whom she and the Duke had at first patronized. It was saying much : for she was a hater *par excellence* ; and afterwards she assigned to Lord Hervey a pre-eminence in her dislike only second to that she had allotted to the detested minister of George II.

At all events the Duchess of Marlborough stood alone in her opinion of Mary Lepell, for never has there been so beautiful a woman so little maligned,

It was in apartments of the women of the bedchamber to the Princess of Wales that Miss Lepell mingled with the only agreeable coterie of a dull court. Sir Robert Walpole, of course, was one of those most conspicuous amid a clique of which Chesterfield, Hervey, and Colonel Selwyn, the father of George Selwyn, formed the chief attractions among the gentlemen. Walpole, though dashing and confident, was not the man to fascinate a young woman of a refined and thoughtful character. Sir Robert, though the most distinguished statesman of his age, since St. John had quitted the scene of political life in England, was a coarse, immoral man. He was at that time a widower, and his conduct as a husband to his first wife had been anything but exemplary. Nothing can be more bitter than Swift's lines upon him, yet they can never be repudiated as wholly inapplicable. Their malevolence does not neutralize their truth.

'With favour and fortune fastidiously blest,
He's loud in his laugh and he's coarse in his jest :
Of favour and fortune unmerited, vain,
A sharper in trifles, a dupe in the main ;
Achieving of nothing, still promising wonders,
By dint of experience improving in blunders ;
Oppressing true merit, exalting the base,
And selling his country to purchase his place ;
A jobber of stocks by retailing false news ;
A prater at court in the style of the stew's ;
Of virtue and worth by profession a jiber ;
Of juries and senates the bully and briber ;
Though I name not the wretch, you'll all know who I mean,
'Tis the cur-dog of Britain and spaniel of Spain.'

Not only had Sir Robert been notorious in his own gallantries, but he had neglected his beautiful and accomplished wife, Catherine Shorter; had left her to withstand the attention, if she could, of the most fashionable and dissipated men in the gay world; and allowed her reputation, if not her character, to suffer from that pernicious contact. Sir Robert was also no longer young, being born in 1676, in the same year which is notable for giving birth to Bolingbroke.

His pretensions to the hand of Mary Lepell were therefore soon set on one side; but that he assisted her with advice how to persevere till she had obtained her pension, is most probable: and that she was by no means unwilling to avail herself of any method of procuring it, is—in those days when honour seemed to have died out altogether—also very likely.

Perhaps the attentions of Walpole stimulated the ardour of John Hervey, who was already, though not in office, a great favourite both with the Princess of Wales and with Mrs. Howard, which was almost the same thing. His elegant figure, in all the modishness of dress which was at that period at its height—in flowing peruke, dainty ruffles, diamond buttons on his fine blotting-paper-coloured coat—was there contrasted with Pope's deformity; his good humour, and the refined courtesy which had been perfected in France, with Pope's essential bitterness, which was so awkwardly glossed over with affectation and professions. Many a laugh, probably, had the three gay Marys at the little poet's expense. They treated *him*, and suffered the poet to treat *them*, in return, with a familiarity which we should greatly censure in the present day, and which ended, in the case of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in a fierce, unreconciled quarrel. The seeds of jealousy of Hervey in Pope—that smallest of men, and greatest of modern libellers—were doubtless laid in that pleasant time when

'Tuneful Alexis on the Thames' fair side,
'The ladies' plaything and the Muses' pride,'

was wafted along the *then* pure stream, amid delicious meadows and glades, to Twickenham, to call for Lady Mary, who was living there; or to the old house at Ham, there to alight, and

walk, little Pope and tall Hervey escorting up and down the grand avenues the three charming Marys.

Sometimes, too, there came with them a less safe companion in their suburban pleasures. This was Frederick Prince of Wales, to whose service John Hervey was attached, who had fallen in love with Mary Bellenden. This beautiful girl, the youngest daughter of John, second Lord Bellenden, had just the manners which fascinate by their gaiety, and mislead the designing by their levity. Never was any one so agreeable ; and all who ever knew her spoke of Mary Bellenden as the *most perfect creature ever seen*. The prince thought so too, for he paid her attentions which she returned with disdain, crossing her arms in his presence, and then saying 'she was not cold.' And when, one evening, sitting by her, Frederick took out his purse and began counting out his money, the high-spirited young lady in disgust—for she hated him, and his money, and his addresses—by a sudden movement, either of hand or foot, sent his royal highness's guineas rolling about the floor, and whilst he was gathering them up ran out of the room.

We can fancy Prince Frederick, therefore, a small man, with eyes of extraordinary brightness, not then married, young and silly, with his face so strongly resembling that of a sheep, one hand in his coat, the other holding the lovely Bellenden's nose-gay, or carrying her Blenheim or her fan—how well can we picture him picking his way, in silk stockings and diamond-buckled shoes, underneath those ancestral elms, Mary all the while scarce deigning him a look !

Behind come Mistress Lepell and Lord Hervey ; she blushing with delight ; touched, but still sensible ; in love, but not madly so ; for her nature is sedate, though of a cheerful turn : her feelings are too sound, too deep, to come to the surface easily.

And he ? Is he what the Duchess of Marlborough would have it—painted, and not a tooth in his head ? or, as Pope describes him, 'Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,' in respect to his demeanour ; whilst he declares that he had 'a cherub's face—a reptile all the rest.'

Can this wretched courtier, so described, it is true, some years

afterwards, have been the object of the lovely Mary Lepell's choice? Nay, more, could she attach herself so entirely to a man

' Whose wit all see-saw between *that* and *this* ;
Now high, now low ; now *master* up, now *miss* ;
And himself one vile antithesis ?

The only trait, according to the late John Wilson Croker, in the celebrated libel from which those lines are taken, that is strictly true, is Hervey's love for *antithesis*, which he inherited from his mother, and which was conspicuous both in speaking and in writing.

Pertness, frivolity, foppery, were the vices of the young then as now, and Hervey no doubt displayed his full share of them : but the ridicule of Pope becomes cruelty when his delicacy of health and valetudinarian habits were attacked ; and the invidious name of 'Sporus,' or of 'Lord Fanny,' betrayed the diabolical malice of the Minister Pulteney, by whom the substance of the libel was written, and of Pope, by whom it was turned into verse, as brilliant as any ever written by him or any other modern poet.

Lord Hailes, in his notes on 'The Opinions of the Duchess of Marlborough,' explains the case. Lord Hervey was threatened in youth with epilepsy, and he could only repel the attacks of that disease by abstemious diet. Hence he took to the use of tea, which was then, as still it is in some parts of the continent, used in England more frequently as a *tisane* in illness than as a refreshment in health. In vain did his father urge him to discontinue the custom of drinking that 'detestable and poisonous plant,' as he called it, which had, he said, once brought his son to death's door, and which would carry him through it if he did not give it up. Lord Hervey's daily food was asses' milk, and once a week he allowed himself an apple. He used emetics daily, and, Lord Hailes admits, was in the habit of painting to conceal his ghastly appearance. These habits certainly were not calculated to propitiate the romantic attachment of a young and admired girl ; nevertheless, in spite of them, in spite of a life of reprehensible immorality, in spite of a court routine, which usually banishes youth long before even

middle age has arrived, Lord Hervey was then, and even in the decline of life, a singularly handsome man, as a portrait of him demonstrates. It was painted in his latter days, and is, Mr. Croker affirms, neither 'ghastly nor forbidding.'

At the time of his courtship of Miss Lepell he was still however, though in what the French would call *petite santé*, not condemned to live by rule, as in later times.

Even Lord Hervey's enemies, however, went out of their way to extol Mary Lepell; and even Pope complimented one so admirable.

For what reason it has not been ascertained, the marriage between Hervey and Mary Lepell was for some time kept secret. It is believed to have taken place on the 20th of May, 1720, but was not proclaimed until the 20th of October, although she had visited Ickworth, the seat of Lord Bristol, twice during the summer of that year, still retaining her maiden name; whilst her father-in-law wrote to her under the endearing name of 'daughter,' as his lordship himself expressed it. Their supposed union was, however, alluded to by Gay in his poem called 'Mr. Pope's Welcome from Greece,' in this couplet—

'Now Hervey, fair of face, I mark full well,
With thee, youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepell.'

This mystery was explained thus. When Mary Bellenden rejected the addresses of Prince Frederick, she owed to him that her affections were engaged. Frederick had, he told her, suspected that this was the case; but he added with the generosity of his nature—for he had that quality in a far more eminent degree than any of his race—that if she would tell him the object of her choice, and not marry without his knowledge, he would consent to the match, and be kind to her husband. Both the single Marys were, be it remembered, somewhat in his power from their position as maids of honour to his mother. Miss Bellenden gave him her promise, but without disclosing the name of her betrothed; and then, fearful of any obstacle being thrown in the way, she was privately married to Colonel Campbell, one of the grooms of the prince's chamber, and, many years afterwards, Duke of Argyll. It is conjectured by

Mr. Croker that Mary Lepell and Hervey took a similar course, fearing lest their union should be disapproved of by their royal patrons. The marriage of both the Marys was announced nearly at the same time. They had probably resolved to brave the storm—if storm there was—together, and to announce the step they had taken, and to give in their resignation as maids of honour at the same time, just a few days previous to the birthday, the 30th of October, when two other young ladies were appointed in their place.

The family into which Mary Lepell now entered were willing, and indeed rejoiced, to receive one so endowed with beauty and fortune. Yet she had a difficult part to play, for they were all peculiar, though clever—all at variance; all, in short, stranger than other human beings: to sum up the whole, they were '*Herveys*.' Lady Mary's definition applied too well.

Never was there a more respectable nobleman than the first Lord Bristol, descended from one of the heroes of the Armada, and ennobled by George I. He was just enough of an original to be agreeable: he was a fine scholar, and wrote verses after the manner of Cowley, who had been patronized by his grandfather, and whose '*Elegy on Hervey*,' his benefactor, is considered by some as approaching in merit to Milton's '*Lycidas*.' With all the polish of a fine gentleman, Lord Bristol in his mode of life was a specimen of the good English squire: he was also unfashionable enough to be a good husband, an indulgent father, and a sincere Christian.

It was the lot of this exemplary man to be united to a woman of most uncertain temper, to whom he was passionately devoted, but whose eccentricity, whose love of pleasure, and love of play, were the talk of the court circle, of which, in her capacity as bedchamber lady to the Princess Caroline, she formed a member. From her, Lord Hervey is said to have inherited his wit and his turn for versification.

From the first days of their union, Lady Hervey and her husband led a very gay and fashionable life, rather on the French than the English system of conjugal domesticity; but on one point they both after a time agreed; this was, to doubt the truth of revelation. The Princess Caroline, although ner-

self, as we have seen, an earnest believer, encouraged free discussion : and Lord Hervey, setting aside the example of his father, cherished a prejudice against creed, and churches and churchmen, which was fostered by the conversation of such men as Tindal, Collins, and Woolston, whose works were then as widely circulated as is now the able but fallacious treatise, 'On the Vestiges of Creation.'

In 1732, Lord Hervey wrote a deistical defence of Mandeville's 'Fable of the Bees,' in reply to Bishop Berkeley's 'Minute Philosopher;' signing the work 'By a Country Clergyman,' and, unfortunately, his intimacy with Conyers Middleton, who had been his tutor, produced a result still more distressing ; it led to free-thinking tendencies in the mind of Lady Hervey. Perhaps, as Croker says, 'free-thinking' is too lenient a word to apply to her opinions.

Some years after her marriage, we find her recommending Tindal's works to Lady Suffolk. 'I beg in my turn,' she writes, 'I may recommend a book to you ; it is writ by Tindal : the title of it, "Christianity as old as the Creation," &c.' Happily the work is forgotten, and the race of 'free-thinking' women—invariably superficial and generally conceited specimens of their sex—has become extinct on this side of the channel, and rarely to be met with in France, since the Restoration. Yet her laxity of faith produced no laxity of morals, as it did in her husband. Women are happy in being guarded by a hundred barriers from temptations which environ man, and which, at the period, and in the rank of life in which Lord Hervey moved, it required strong faith to resist. He soon, however, became one of the most notable libertines of a reprobate age ; and even the early death of his brother Carr, brought on by a dissolute life, failed to warn him. That event happened in 1723, and, of course, made a material difference in Lord Hervey's fortune and expectations. Henceforth he was no longer the Honourable John, but Lord Hervey ; and he was returned for Bury St. Edmunds. Yet it is remarkable that whilst Sir Robert Walpole professed to like him, Lord Hervey never held any appointment under government ; a source of mortification to this otherwise successful courtier.

He continued at court, excepting when, unaccompanied by his wife, he travelled to Italy; whilst she passed much of her time at Bath, or at Ickworth, where she was beloved by her father-in-law, and even by the eccentric countess who quarrelled with every one else. As a wife, as a daughter-in-law, and as a mother, she was equally estimable, equally valuable and beloved. And perhaps with all the noted inconstancy of her husband, she was happier in her married state than in that of a maid of honour, a kind of slavery which Pope has thus wittily described:—‘We all agreed,’ he says, after relating how he had met Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Bellenden, and Mrs. Lepell, at Hampton Court, ‘that the life of a maid of honour was of all things the most miserable, and wished that every woman who envied it had a specimen of it. To eat Westphalia ham in a morning, ride over hedges and ditches on borrowed hacks, come home in the heat of the day with a fever, and (what is worse a hundred times) with a red mark on the forehead from an uneasy hat; all this may qualify them to make excellent wives for fox-hunters, and bear abundance of ruddy-complexioned children. As soon as they can wipe off the sweat of the day, they must simper for an hour, and catch cold in the princess’s apartment; from thence (as Shakspeare has it) to dinner, with what appetite they may—and after that, till midnight, walk, work, or think, which they please. I can easily believe no lone house in Wales, with a mountain or a rookery, is more contemplative than this court; and as a proof of it, I need only tell you, Miss Lepell walked with me three or four hours by moonlight, and we met no creature of any quality but the king, who gave audience to the vice-chamberlain, all alone, under the garden wall.’

Nevertheless, the giddy Mary Bellenden, shortly after her marriage, regretted this sauntering, half-private half-public existence, and wrote pleadingly to Mrs. Howard to let her go back to court; but her more rational friend, Miss Lepell, found her enjoyment in the cultivated society, the literary and political interests of which Lord Hervey and his friend, at that time, William Pulteney, formed a sort of centre: and her letters are full of expressions of contentment, and are descriptive

of the varied scenes in which she mixed. It was just the difference between a mere belle and a woman of cultivated understanding.

During her whole life, Lady Hervey evinced a great respect for Lord Hervey's critical judgment, although it seems to have been scarcely superior to her own, and cherished a fond attachment to him; yet there were many drawbacks to her happiness. Lord Hervey's malady increased, and in 1729 he was advised to travel to Italy for his health: Lady Hervey, on account of her children, was unable to accompany him. On his lordship's return, he resumed his attendance at St. James's, where his former patroness, Caroline, now reigned paramount as queen-consort, after the death of George I. At court, there must be no imperfections, no sickness, no sorrow: at the German courts, especially, no one must appear till the period of mourning is over. 'Those who 'hedge' a monarch or his queen must be free from all mortal ills. Lord Hervey, therefore, found it essential to conceal from all eyes, except those of trusted friends, his distressing epileptic complaint. Stephen Fox, who had travelled with him in order to take care of him, and who must have been aware of his disease, and Lady Hervey, were his sole confidants.

'I have been so very much out of order,' Lord Hervey writes to the former, 'since I writ last, that going into the drawing-room before the king, I was taken with one of those disorders with the odious name that you know happened to me once at Lincoln's-Inn Fields play-house. I had just warning enough to catch hold of somebody (God knows who) in one side of the lane made for the king to pass through, and stopped till he was gone by. I recovered my senses enough immediately to say, when people came up to me asking what was the matter, that it was a *cramp* took me suddenly in my leg, and (that *cramp* excepted) that I was as well as ever I was in my life. I was far from it; for I saw everything in a mist, was so giddy I could hardly walk, which I said was owing to my *cramp* not quite gone off. To avoid giving suspicion, I stayed and talked with people about ten minutes, and then (the Duke of Grafton being there to light the king) came down to my lodgings where * * * I

am now far from well, but better, and prodigiously pleased, since I was to feel this disorder, that I contrived to do it *à l'insu de tout le monde*. Mr. Churchill was close by me when it happened, and takes it all for a *cramp*. The king, queen, &c., inquired about my *cramp* this morning, and laughed at it; I joined in the laugh, said how foolish an accident it was, and so it has passed off: nobody but Lady Hervey (from whom it was impossible to conceal what followed) knows anything of it.'

His lordship, with all his love for gallantry, seems to have justly appreciated a wife at once kind and discreet. To her might be applied those lines of Pope's which were addressed to Mrs. Howard—

'I know a thing that's most uncommon,
(Envy be silent and attend,)
I know a reasonable woman,
Handsome and witty, yet a friend.'

Whilst Lord Hervey visited Italy without his wife, Lady Hervey passed much of her time in Paris. In 1731, Mrs. Howard, whom both she and Miss Bellenden flattered, and perhaps really liked, although they were perfectly aware of her real character and position in the court, became mistress of the robes to Queen Caroline. To her many of Lady Hervey's most charming letters were addressed—to that 'dearest of Howards' as she sometimes called her.

In the present day, women amuse and edify themselves and sometimes others by works of history, or biography, or poetry, or fiction. We even find a lady writing a capital work on navigation: another is the astronomer of her age: a third immortalizes every English queen, bringing each royal consort so much *en evidence* that one can hardly avoid fancying that we have known the long defunct in some older time. A fourth introduces to our most intimate acquaintance each Prince of Wales of the past: a host of lively authoresses take us into France: we are transported even to Bengal and back by two giddy girls: we have not, in short, a taste, a wish, a want, a deficiency that the press does not, through an angelic host of delicate pen-women, supply. We go down as low as needlework—not to mention cookery or gardening, both high-art.

In the seventeenth century all this was cramped into letters. Few women of rank and talent thought of publishing, which was generally done by inferior personages, such as tutors, parsons, half-pay captains, secretaries, or 'your very humble servants,' a class of which happily, where there is now a battalion, there was then a regiment. But a lady, with a vocation for scribbling, took out a sheet of letter paper—*such* paper! coarse, rough, small in size—and dipped her goose-quill into ink—such ink! so brown, so perishable—and, in a hand not *much* inferior to that of your lady's maid when she makes out the washing bill, indited a missive on politics, scandal, literature, or religion, which was despatched to some noted person who could circulate the composition favourably. It is worthy of remark, that in few of the letters of the Augustan period are private feelings, secret sorrows, or heartfelt joys, or the ordinary anxieties of life, dwelt on: it is all for and of the public that they write.

Lady Hervey was an authoress of this description, and her letters are very lively, full of good sense, and as refined as those of Lord Hervey's wife and of Mrs. Howard's friend can be expected to be. Whilst Mrs. Bellenden begins one of her letters with 'My Gad!' those of Lady Hervey are always couched in political terms. When at Ickworth, her epistles turn upon the books she reads; but she still longs to hear something of her old haunts; of the companions she is severed from, and of those, more especially, who surround Mrs. Howard, then Lady Suffolk, whom she calls her 'Swiss Countess,' in allusion to the liberal opinions of the Mistress of the Robes, the Swiss being then the representatives of the liberal principles in Europe, whilst the apartments of Lady Suffolk were termed 'our Swiss cantons.'

Sometimes Lady Hervey writes from Goodwood, where a great deal of company was expected. 'I believe,' she says, 'we shall not be much the better for it; for cyphers in company do not, like cyphers in arithmetic, add to the figures and increase their value; unless it be by comparison.' At one time she is visiting the Duke of Richmond at Aubigné, in Berri, a seat formerly belonging to Louise de la Querouaille, Duchess of

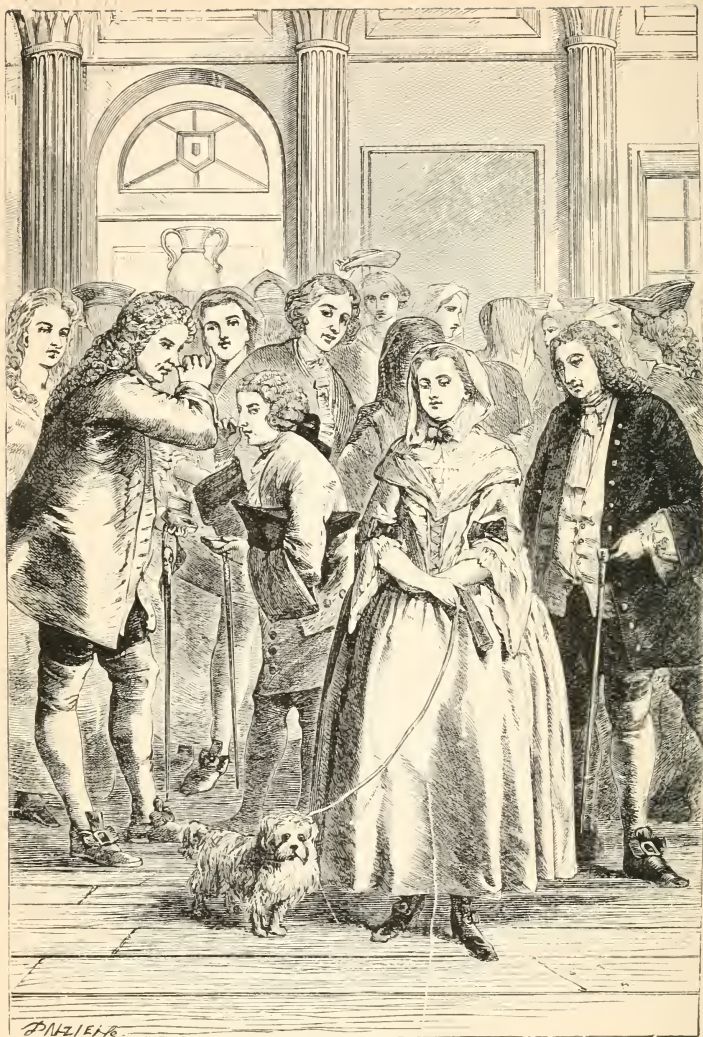
Portsmouth, and the grandmother of the Duke of Richmond in Lady Hervey's time. Berri had been raised into a duchy by Louis XIV., in honour of Louise de la Querouaille (those being the days when characters like hers *were* honoured). The Duke of Richmond was received in such a manner, on taking possession of this estate of equivocal inheritance, that Lady Hervey wrote it: 'would fill a newspaper' to tell it. She was always very partial to France. 'As for the French,' she said, 'we must either love or hate them; there is no mean.'

'But,' she adds, 'I shall send you no account of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond's entrance into this town, nor of their reception; it would fill a newspaper. But if you have a great mind to be informed of it, look into the English History for the account of King Charles II.'s entrance into London on his restoration, and that will pretty well answer it; adding a few more harangues, larger bonfires, greater illuminations, more rockets, finer presents, louder drums, shriller trumpets, finer colours, and stronger *huzzas*; which last (as a French servant told me) is in English, "*Live the Duke and Duchess of Aubigné!*" I questioned it a little at first; but a second servant confirmed it, and I am convinced.

From Paris her letters were still more lively; and, indeed, nothing could be more attractive to a person of intelligence than the materials of which society there was then composed; and Lady Hervey's previous life, under the very lax influence of Lady Suffolk, must naturally have led her to think lightly of all that *honnête galanterie* which to most Englishwomen is so revolting.

Several English noblemen at that time resided occasionally in Paris. The fortunes of the French noblesse were not then, as now, irretrievably injured, whilst their modes of life were simple. Suppers were in vogue: those fine old hôtels, of which here and there one sees a specimen in the Faubourg St. Germain, were in all their picturesque splendour when Lady Hervey visited the French capital.

'Lord, madam!' writes Horace Walpole, 'speaking of the banker La Borde's house to Lady Suffolk, 'how poor all your houses in London after his! In the first place, you must have



THE FAIR LEPELL—SURROUNDED IN THE PUMP-ROOM AT BATH BY MANY NOTABLE CHARACTERS OF THE DAY, MINGLING IN SOCIAL CHAT—LORD CHESTERFIELD, BEAU NASH, HORACE WALPOLE, LORD CHATHAM, THE DUCHESS OF QUEENSBURY, LADY SUFFOLK, ETC.

a garden half as long as the Mall, and then you must have fourteen windows, each as long as the other half, looking into it; and each window must consist of only eight panes of looking-glass. You must have a first and second ante-chamber, and they must have nothing in them but dirty servants. Next must be the grand cabinet, hung with red damask, in gold frames, and covered with eight large and very bad pictures, that cost four thousand pounds. I cannot afford them you a farthing cheaper. Under these, to give an air of lightness, must be hung bas-reliefs in marble!

Much of Lady Hervey's time was also spent at Bath, in a vain endeavour to eradicate an hereditary predisposition to gout from her constitution. She bore this painful malady with great patience; and with similar sweetness of character she sustained those other troubles which, though not mentioned in her letters, cannot fail to have vexed her: the devotion which Lord Hervey expressed, and perhaps felt, for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could not have been particularly agreeable to an attached wife. Whilst abroad, though it is asserted that most affectate letters were addressed to Lady Hervey by his lordship, none have been found; whilst the lines he wrote to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, more like the tender effusions, as even Mr. Croker admits, of a lover of twenty, than of a friend of thirty-three—these remain in all their sentimental elegance.

'Oh! would kind Heaven, these tedious sufferings past,
Permit me, Ickworth, rest and health at last,
In that lov'd shade, my youth's delightful seat,
My early pleasure and my late retreat.

* * * *

There might I trifle carelessly away
The milder evening of life's clouded day;
From business and the world's intrusion free,
With books, with love, with beauty, and with thee.

* * * *

But if the gods, sinister still, deny
To live in Ickworth, let me there but die;
Thy hands to close my eyes in death's long night,
Thy image to attract their latest sight;
Then to the grave attend thy poet's hearse,
And love his memory as you loved his verse.'

Then came a duel with Pulteney, and a quarrel with Pope, both of which events were the talk of the town for many weeks ; whilst Lady Hervey sometimes took refuge in the quiet duties of a country life at Ickworth, or the gossiping circles of Bath, or in the enchantments of Paris.

Lord Hervey's time, too, was incessantly occupied in those ridiculous court cabals which he has himself described with so much humour, notwithstanding his dissipated character, his painted face, his deistical principles, and his valetudinarian habits ; his vegetable diet, his bread-sauce, his 'milk-tea,' his breakfast of dry biscuit, and all those precautions which a hypochondriac adopts, but which an unbelieving healthy friend laughs at. Notwithstanding his premature decay, and the 'ridicule made upon him,' as he expresses it, by 'ignorance, impertinence and gluttony,' Lord Hervey unwittingly, and perhaps unwillingly, captivated the heart of the Princess Caroline, the daughter of George II. Horace Walpole, who knew everything, found this out ; and there are many passages in Lord Hervey's own Memoirs that confirm the fact. There was something, doubtless, soothing in his courtier-like devotion both to the wife, and daughter of a monarch who would have been, if not a king, a subject, of the most favourable description, for Sir Cresswell Cresswell and his Divorce Court in these days. Amongst other anecdotes, one related by Lord Hervey is highly characteristic of the vulgarity and temper of George the Second. The queen had ventured, during the king's absence, to take away some very bad pictures out of Kensington Palace, and to substitute some very good ones. There was a certain fat Venus, painted like a sign-post, that his Majesty preferred to all the Vandykes in the world, and especially to 'three nasty children,' as he styled them (probably those of Charles I.), that the queen had hung up near a door, and he ordered them to be taken away. Whilst the queen, her daughter, and Lord Hervey were talking about this the next morning, the king came into the gallery, and stayed about five minutes. He 'snubbed the queen, who was drinking chocolate, for being always stuffing ; the Princess Emily for not hearing him ; the Princess Caroline

for being grown fat; the Duke of (Cumberland) for standing awkwardly; Lord Hervey for not knowing what relation the Prince of Sultzbach was to the Elector Palatine; and then carried the queen to walk, and be re-snubbed in the garden. The pictures were altered according to the king's directions soon after: the excuse Lord Hervey made for their not being done that morning, was the man's being out of the way who was always employed on these occasions.'

It appears, however, that the Princess Caroline was not only the object of Lord Hervey's regard but of that of his wife, which was continued to her royal highness many years after the death of Hervey; and with respect to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, that their correspondence, which was returned to her by Lord Hervey's son, George, showed that a long and steady friendship between two persons of different sexes might exist for many years *without love*. Lord Hervey professed to admire women who were no longer young; and Lady Mary was, during his gallant attentions to her, past forty-seven:

'Just in the noon of life, those golden days
When the mind ripens ere the form decays.

She was six years his senior.

The decline and death of her husband may therefore be supposed to have given Lady Hervey far greater concern than these platonic attachments, towards which she seems to have entertained no aversion. During the year 1742, Lord Hervey's health continued to decline. 'When I say that I am still alive, and am still Privy Seal,' he wrote to Lady Mary Wortley at Avignon, 'it is all I can say for the pleasures of the one or the honour of the other.' He next complains that he had been three weeks ill of a fever, 'an annual tax that his detestable constitution paid to this detestable climate every spring.' He was then, he wrote, in easy circumstances; Lepell, his second daughter, was recently married to the Hon. Constantine Phipps, afterwards Earl of Mulgrave. The Duchess of Buckingham had left him (Lord Hervey) Buckingham House and all the furniture and plate for his life—but that life was rapidly

waning away. 'The last stages of a mournful life,' he wrote in June, 1743, are filthy roads and like all other roads, I find the further one goes from the capital the more tedious the miles grow, and the more rough and disagreeable the way.' Yet he was then at Ickworth: 'I know,' he adds, 'of no turnpikes to mend them; but doctors who have the management of it, like the commissioners for most other turnpikes, seldom execute what they undertake; they only put the toll of the poor cheated passenger in their pockets, and leave every jolt at least half as bad as they find it, if not worse.' This sentence formed a part of his last letter to his distant friend. Lord Hervey died on the 8th of August, 1743. Lady Hervey remained with Lord Bristol till his death, which took place in 1751. She acted towards him with the duty and affection of a daughter. In the October of the same year in which she died, writing to the Rev. Edward Morris, who had been tutor to her sons, in a strain of mingled sorrow and philosophy—

'They,' she writes, 'are insensible who do not feel their own misfortunes; but they are weak who do not struggle with them; and true philosophy consists in making life worth our care, not in thinking it below it. The misfortunes Mrs. P. can have met with are few and slight compared to those I have experienced: I see and feel the greatness of this last in every light, but I will struggle to the utmost; and though I know—at least I think—I can never be happy again, yet I will be as little miserable as possible, and will make use of the reason I have to soften, not to aggravate my affliction. I hope she will do the same, for I wish her happiness as sincerely, as warmly as I do my own.'

Many sources of interest, however, in some measure supplied the place of a husband who was unworthy of so much regret. Four sons—George, Augustus, Frederick, William, successively Earls of Bristol—and four daughters, Lady Mulgrave, Lady Mary Fitzgerald, and two who died unmarried, survived their father. On the youngest, Lady Caroline, Churchill wrote these lines, which seem to indicate that the graces of Lady Hervey descended to this her youngest daughter—

•That face, that form, that dignity, that ease,
Those powers of pleasing, with that will to please,
By which Lepell, when in her youthful days,
Even from the currish Pope extorted praise,
We see transmitted in her daughter shine,
And view a new Lepell in Caroline !

Lady Hervey appears afterwards to have returned in some measure to the world, for in 1765, only three years before her death, Horace Walpole writes the most amusing apology to her for his absence from some reception at her house. He complains that it was scandalous at his age to be carried backwards and forwards to balls and suppers and parties as he was ; his resolutions of growing old were admirable ; he always awoke with a sober plan, and ended the day in dissipation. But he promises his old friends to begin to be between forty and fifty by the time he was fourscore ; and he believed he should keep to his resolution, not having chalked out any business that would take him above forty years more ; ‘ so that if he did not get acquainted with the grandchildren of all the present age, he hoped still to lead a sober life before he died.’ We find him also talking of two new fashions brought by Lady Hervey from Paris ; the one a tin funnel covered with green riband, holding water in which the ladies kept their bouquets fresh : he feared they would take frequent colds in overturning this reservoir. The other he half playfully, half angrily insists on, since Marshal Saxe was victorious in Flanders over our troops, and declares we must step out of the high pantouffles that were made for us by those cunning shoemakers at Ramilies and Poitiers, and go clumping about, perhaps, in wooden shoes. ‘ My Lady Hervey, who, you know, dotes upon everything French, is charmed with the hopes of these new shoes, and has already ordered herself a pair of pigeon wood.’ This letter was written shortly after one of Lady Hervey’s last visits to Paris, where, amongst other agreeable visits, she had passed some days at L’Isle Adam, in the valley of Montmorenci, with the Prince and Princesse de Conti. Her description of the kindness of the French (in the classes superior in intelligence and character) may be echoed in the heart of every one well acquainted with a people but little understood and much libelled by us.

‘ I am sure I have reason to praise the friendly as well as

agreeable disposition of these people : it is not possible to have found more friendly, attentive, essential marks of kindness, even in the midst of the most affectionate relations and friends, than I have found here during my illness and on my recovery. My acquaintance called at my door every day, and sometimes twice in a day, to know how I did, and if there was nothing I wanted they could help me to. Three or four of my more particular acquaintances, I may say friends, passed an hour or two every day in my antechamber to hear from my physician and women what symptoms and changes appeared in me. I had light quilts, couches, easy-chairs, and all sorts of things to contribute to my ease sent in to me ; and on my recovery the best sort of wines of several kinds, lest what I bought should be adulterated. Little chickens out of the country, new-laid eggs warm from the hen, and a thousand other little delicacies to please a difficult palate and not load a weak stomach. If you could guess at all the proofs of kindness I meet with, and all the agreeableness of my way of living here, you would neither blame nor wonder at my reluctance to quit this delightful place, and most agreeable people. Adieu, sir ; I have neither paper nor time to add anything more.'

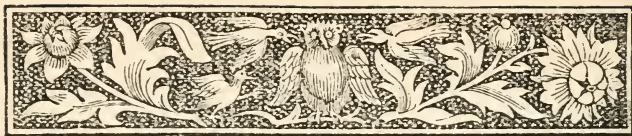
Historical and critical reading, visits, journeys to Paris and to London, diversified Lady Hervey's life until she became too infirm to move from home. She died on the 2nd of September, 1768, in the sixty-eighth year of her age. Horace Walpole, to whom she left a small remembrance in her will, refers to her decease with more feeling than was his usual strain.

'I have had another misfortune, as I had last year in poor Lady Suffolk. My Lady Hervey, one of my great friends, died in my absence. She is a great loss to several persons ; her house was one of the most agreeable in London ; and her own friendliness, good breeding, and amiable temper had attached all that knew her. Her sufferings with the gout and rheumatism were terrible, and never could affect her patience or divert her attention from her friends.'

It is some merit or good fortune to be eulogized by a man who loved so few, and to have escaped the sarcasm of Horace seems almost a miracle. Lady Hervey was a woman after his

own heart--a moral and amiable woman of the world. Although her letters in the latter part of her life are serious and thoughtful, they do not evince the faith, the hope, the childlike love to our Creator that appear in Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu's last epistolary productions. Yet Lady Hervey *acted* well, and, we may hope, on a basis of principle that she did not choose to manifest. Her beauty in early life has been greatly praised: from a miniature in middle age it seems to have been owing to a sweet and intelligent expression rather than to symmetry of feature. In the portrait referred to, one of the treasures of Strawberry Hill, she is painted in a hood drawn partially back from her light hair, which is dressed in the rococo style; a small bow of very narrow riband confines the hood underneath the chin. The dress is laced in front, with an ample fichu of thin muslin over the neck and shoulders; the sleeves fall in long folds over the arms, but are drawn up at the elbows. Such was probably her ordinary costume: it was simple, convenient, and suitable; and both the costume and the age for sitting were probably selected by Horace as calculated to perpetuate her remembrance, not as she looked in courts and festivities, but in the intimate circle of everyday life, of which her wit, her gentleness, her good sense, and her patience under suffering, must have constituted her the charm and the resource.





MADAME DE STAËL.

Risen from the Ranks.—Necker Struggles Upwards.—Political Ups and Downs.—June, 1789.—Gibbon's Idol.—A Spartan Mother.—An Offer to Gibbon.—An Unexceptionable Choice.—A Convenient Husband.—Apology for Madame de Staël.—Her Love of Paris.—Saves the Lives of her Friends.—Days of Blood.—Madame de Staël Arrested.—The Colony of Emigrés.—Madame de Staël's English.—The French Colony at Mickleham.—Napoleon's Opinion of Women.—De Staël a Rival to Napoleon.—Constant's Famous Speech.—Madame de Staël a Political Leader.—Exiled.—Retires to Weimar.—Schlegel.—Death of Necker.—Italy and 'Corinne.'—Visit to Vienna.—Madame de Staël's 'Penny Post.'—The Haunt of Genius.—Voltaire's Church.—Coppet.—Petty Persecutions.—The Young Wounded Soldier.—Madame de Staël Meditates Suicide.—Flight to Russia.—The Lioness in London.—The Lioness Attacks the Mastiffs.—Her Son's Duel.—Byron's Notes on Madame de Staël.—D'Allemagne and Childe Harold.—Byron's Half-shut Eyes.—Her Salon at Paris.—Byron at Coppet.—Death of Madame de Staël.—Review of her Character.



Of the many Frenchwomen who have ruled society for good or ill—and when does a Frenchwoman fail to rule if she have beauty, wit, or vice enough?—there is none we can so thoroughly admire as the authoress of 'Corinne.' Not that our admiration can be unmingled. Few men, perhaps *no* women, have had their lives thoroughly ventilated by an inquisitive public without the discovery of some littleness that marred their greatness, adding nothing to the attractiveness of their personal characters. The men and women we adore in print and in public, to whom we pour out freely the riches of our praise, the fulness of our admiration, are often disliked in their families or hated by their friends. One drives economy to niggardliness; another is found perking his or her head in enviable complacency before a private looking-glass; another torments his servants; another destroys, with a Spartan virtue all the hopes and happiness of her children; another is

secretly covetous ; another adulatory ; another servile ; another pompous ; another, wise as he speaks or acts before the world, an arrant fool in his household. In truth, if one were to look *au dessous des cartes*, as Madame de Sévigné advises, not Carlyle or Emerson could find a hero in the world. 'No man is a hero to his valet,' and *certes, certissime*, no woman is a heroine to her lady's-maid.

But there is this grand difference between Madame de Staël and the other French leaders of society—they had contemptible, she pardonable faults ; or, rather, they had faults where she had foibles. Looking at her only as a woman of society, we may perhaps assign four principal causes to her superiority : she had much mind ; she had little beauty ; she was educated in such a manner that the former supplied the want, but did not usurp the office of the latter ; and, lastly, she was a Protestant. In most celebrated Frenchwomen beauty has been a great temptation : where this was wanting, wit, ill directed, has been no less so. If they have had any education at all, it has been a bad one ; and if they have had any religion at all, it has been confined to that late-sought devotion which is a quiet salve for the conscience, but can take no one to heaven.

Madame de Staël owed much to her parents ; and as her earlier years were entirely mixed up in the events of their later ones, it may be well to give sketches of them. All our readers know that Necker was the great finance minister of that unfortunate sovereign, Louis XVI. Do they all know that he began his career as a *commis*, or clerk, in a banking-house ? or, knowing this, can they see something of the man already ? Not that every man who rises from insignificance to eminence, or from penury to opulence, is either an admirable or a loveable man. Nine-tenths of such men have had no object in view but self ; and too often the long devotion to their own desires makes them, when they reach the summit of their own ascent, incapable of broad views, generous measures, or noble sacrifices. Necker was not one of these. But they and he had one valuable quality in common—energy. This quality his daughter inherited.

Necker was born in 1734, in that town which can boast more

heroes than any of its size, Geneva. It had cherished Calvin and Voltaire, the greatest revolutionists of religion and philosophy. It was now to send forth an honest man than either in the person of Jacques Necker. The son of the Genevan professor of civil law, he received as good an education as his native town could give a young boy: but at fifteen had to begin life. He was sent to Paris and placed in the banking-house of Vernet as a clerk. Another man, under his circumstances, backed by no interest, might have been clerk there for ever. Young Necker worked with that steady application which eventually wins the hard-fought day, and rose to be first cashier, and in time a partner of Thelusson's bank. Perseverance lifted him so far, but might not have done much more for him. He had reached a landing where his natural capabilities were to come into play. A few wisely-made, happy speculations brought him in time wealth. Wealth recommended him to the worthy Genevans. They made him their minister at Paris. Soon after Thelusson died, and Necker set up a bank of his own. Wealth brought wealth. Many men make it, few know how to keep it. Necker, being neither covetous nor extravagant, knew this and prospered. The king's advisers saw a man who could make the most and the best of his own money, and in their straits—for the Bourbons were always in want of funds, and Louis XVI. most of them all—thought he would be a proper man to take care of theirs.

In 1776 they made him Director, and soon after Comptroller-General of the Finance Department. He was the first Protestant that had held any great post in the government since the terrible day of St. Bartholomew. Necker found the finances in the worst possible condition: reform, economy, prudence, were his great principles. He nobly refused all emolument for the Herculean labour before him. The people applauded, but the court disliked, his restrictive measures. The difficulty of his position induced him to resign in 1781. He had, however, already published his '*Compte Rendu*,' or account of his administration. This was attacked by his successor, M. de Calonne. Necker prepared a reply, which he sent to Louis, who, while convinced of its veracity, implored him not

to publish it. The ex-minister felt that the nation was his judge, that his character was at stake, and determined to put his defence before the people. The consequence of this act was an order of exile to a distance of forty leagues from Paris. So great was his popularity at this moment that the citizens accompanied him in large numbers out of Paris. This word, 'exile,' fell like a thunderbolt on his daughter. Thirty years later, it had rung too loud in her own ears to make any impression. During his retirement, instead of attacking his enemies, as a less Christianly man might have done, he employed himself in the composition of a work entitled 'De l'Importance des Opinions Religieuses.'

It would be out of place to sum up the political history of the next seven years, when Europe watched with awe the great struggle between an excited, disgusted people, and its obstinate, incompetent rulers. Minister after minister was tried and dismissed. The people, disappointed, put off, and cheated with a stone when they clamoured for bread, prepared for a grand outburst. The storm-cloud grew and grew, and had nearly covered the heavens, ready to break in lightnings, when Necker, more on account of his popularity than of his supposed ability, was invited to take the helm of government once more in 1788. As he did so, the funds rose thirty per cent., and the hopes of the nation even higher. But he was not the man for a great emergency. He needed time and patience, and neither were allowed him. His admiration for the English form of government induced him to hope that he could introduce it into France. In modelling the constitution, he claimed acknowledgment for the existence of that large class, of which he was a member, and which had hitherto been overlooked by the government, the *tiers état*, the *bourgeoisie*, the mercantile, trading, and artisan class, in short, the *middle* class of France. He claimed for it an equal strength in the Assembly with that of the nobility and clergy together. He desired to convert the absolute government of France into a limited monarchy. At another time he might have succeeded; as it was he failed. The very strength which he gave to the popular party, while it irritated the court and the nobility more than ever, hastened

the revolution which none but excessive measures on one side or the other could have averted.

The folly and obstinacy of Louis brought the matter to a crisis in June, 1789. Relying on the hope of foreign support, he resolved to make one last struggle to recover everything, and destroy with one blow the work that had been slowly progressing so long. One step in this direction was to dismiss the popular minister and get him well out of the country. Necker might have raised his voice, and the people would have risen to protect him; but he was too moderate a man to wish such a rescue. He was at dinner when the order of exile came. He was in the habit of driving out after that early meal. Without either changing their dress or taking a particle of luggage, he and his wife mounted their carriage as usual and drove away from Paris, not knowing when they might return. The moment his departure was known, the theatres were closed, though it was on Sunday evening, and barricades were run up in every direction. The Revolution had begun.

The Assembly cancelled his exile, and he returned to enjoy the applause of the people for a space. Fool, indeed, is he whom the voice of a throng can fascinate. Necker was too moderate a man to deal with Girondins, Jacobins, and Cordeliers, with an infuriated people, abusing the liberty that it had gained at last and clamouring now for licence. Marat abused him in the 'Ami du Peuple.' Others called him 'aristocrat.' His attempt to shield the monarch, while he struggled to bring him round to sensible measures, incensed the revolutionists against him. Worthy and well-meaning as he was, he had neither the courage nor the abilities to stand the brunt of the raging waves of popular discord, and in Sept., 1790, he sent in his resignation. It was accepted with perfect indifference. His popularity was long since over. Disheartened, disappointed, disgusted at the result of his labours and the ingratitude of the people for whom he had worked, he retired to Coppet (of which we shall speak later), and attempted to console himself with literature. In 1804 he died at a ripe old age.

Such was, briefly, the life of Madame de Staël's father. His character may be pretty well seen through it—moderate, sen-

sible, honest, and straightforward. There are some other points, to discover which we must know more of his private life. His daughter, who was devoted to him, and thought him one of the greatest statesmen of the world, has given one or two hints of his good heart, his sensibility, and his aspirations after public usefulness. Probably she inherited from him the softer parts of her character; but these may also be owing to a reaction against the puritanical hardness of her mother.

This mother was Gibbon's love, if that historian ever was in love, which may well be doubted. Susanne Curchod was the daughter of the Protestant pastor of Crassy in Switzerland, who educated her in all the stern morality of a rigid Calvinist. Gibbon was a young man at Lausanne, the place he loved more than any other, when he met and fell in love with her. Her parents were poor, and readily agreed to the marriage he proposed; but the stern old gentleman at home refused to allow his son to marry a girl without a penny. 'After a painful struggle,' he says, 'I yielded to my fate. I sighed as a lover: I obeyed as a son. My wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits of a new life.' In other words, he was *not* in love.

The rejected damsel was too much of a Spartan to let this first love blight her life. She was thoroughly a 'good girl,' with as little romance as Calvinism leaves to its devotees. On the death of her father, she resolved to support herself and entered a school at Geneva as a teacher. Here Necker, returning to his native town, after twenty years of hard up-hill work, found, admired, wooed, and easily won her. She made him an excellent wife. Duty was her grand guide, and he was, perhaps, too much wrapped up in ambition to care for more. Nay, the father of the greatest French authoress had a horror of lady-writers; and when he discovered in his wife an inclination to wield the pen, he showed such displeasure that thenceforth she wrote her '*Mélanges*' only in odd moments and almost by stealth.

The only fruit of this union was Anne-Marie-Louise-Germaine Necker, born in Paris in 1766. If Madame Necker had had her way she would have made a Quakeress of this child. But

the very same despotism which was at that time preparing France for revolution, made of the young girl a highly imaginative authoress instead of a strict dry Puritan. It was in vain that Madame Necker applied rule and compass to a human soul. It would not be cut into straight lines, nor come out in dull, ugly, yet highly respectable forms. The little girl was soon cutting out paper figures and making them act their part in mimic life. The mother came down on her. The paper men and women were hurriedly thrust into the child's bosom, only to be drawn out again when mamma was gone.

Yet Madame Necker did much for her. She directed her reading, and gave her a stock of valuable knowledge which she used liberally in after years. The child, too, loved her parents. As an instance of this we may quote an anecdote relating to Gibbon. The historian, though he had recovered his passion for Susanne Curchod, was quite alive to the charms of Madame Necker's well-balanced, sternly-upright mind. He visited the Neckers constantly in Paris. Perhaps the little girl of ten, with her acute powers of observation, discovered the pleasure which her mother took in the society of her former lover. Be this as it may, she noticed that Gibbon was a favourite guest, and that the grief of her parents at his departure was great. An idea gets into her head and there matures. She steals quietly to her mother, and proposes that she herself shall marry Mr. Gibbon, in order that he may never again be taken from them! Poor little thing! she could not then guess that in after years Gibbon and she would represent almost the antipodes of the intellectual globe.

At the age of eleven she was a forward child. Her father's guests, who were some of the most distinguished men of the day, such as Marmontel and the Baron de Grimm, historians of another generation, took great notice of her. On one occasion the Abbé Raynal held her little hands for a long time and talked to her as if she had been a woman; and, little doubt, she answered him in the same strain. She amused herself, even at this age, with writing comedies and tragedies, and, like every great writer, began her vocation very early in life.

But the girl grew into a woman. In England, she might

have come out early as an authoress, have captivated a man worthy of her mind, and been happy or unhappy according to the measure of her dreams. In France she was spared the necessity of choosing. Probably, as Necker's only daughter, she might have had an *embarras de choix*. Anyhow, she was not allowed to interfere in the matter. A Protestant, a respectable man of good means, of good position, and so on, was the desideratum for a husband in the eyes of these worthy parents.

Now Paris or France contained scores of men of good means and good position—nay, if the Neckers had cared for it, of rank—who would have been happy to offer their hands to the minister's daughter. Will any one doubt it, when he is told that her *dot* was the enormous sum of eighty thousand pounds, and reminded that the tenth part of that is considered a good marriage portion for a French girl even in the present day? But it was not equally easy to find a young French Protestant combining these advantages—for such the Neckers, with all their Calvinism, considered them; and indeed it may be observed that worldliness and other-worldliness often unite in the same individual. One would have hoped from Necker, with his love of English institutions, and from Madame Necker, with her high Spartan principles, that they, at least, would have regarded marriage in some nobler light than as a mere contract of mutual commercial benefit; and if any one plead that this view of the sacred tie was so completely that of the whole French nation, that to take any other would have been considered as ultra-romantic, it must be remembered that whatever the general ideas on the subject, the changes which preceded the Revolution introduced a greater freedom even in the matter of marriage, and that about this time it was much more customary than it had ever been to allow girls when of a reasonable age to make a choice among their suitors.

These thronged around Mdlle. Necker with her eighty thousand pounds in cash and large expectancies; but, as we have said, the religion was an obstacle with most. Among the Protestant members of the corps diplomatique was a young Swede, named Eric Magnus, Baron de Staël-Holstein. He was secre-

tary to the Swedish embassy : he was a great favourite with Gustavus III. of Sweden, who encouraged his suit, and promised to make him his ambassador on the first vacancy, if he succeeded in winning the hand of the daughter of a powerful minister like Necker ; further, he was young and handsome ; and, further, he had no quality, but an easy—too easy—temper to recommend him. When we remember the romantic, one may say sentimental, character of the author of ‘ *Corinne* ’ and ‘ *Dephine* : ’ when we find in her works an almost *English* tone of feeling in regard to domestic matters, we may well wonder that she should have consented so easily to the proposition of her father to marry a young man for whom she felt no kind of affection. But though some people have called Madame de Staël more than half English, looking at her works, we have only to examine her life to be persuaded that she was perfectly French. She took a French view of the sacred bond of matrimony. Filial love has always held a higher place in France than conjugal affection. Mdlle. Necker was wrapped up in her father, whom she regarded as the greatest man of his day, and she accepted the husband he proposed as a matter of course. There was only one condition to be made—he was never to ask her to leave France. To this the young baron readily consented, and the marriage took place in 1786.

From this period this convenient husband figures little in the life of Madame de Staël. He appears to have been prodigal or generous to a most alarming extent ; and his first act was to convey to his intimate friend Count Fersen, on his marriage-day, the whole of his ministerial salary. It is not certain, but may be suspected, that this act was in consequence of an agreement between the friends, in virtue of which the count undertook to secure the heiress’s hand for his friend.

The baron was, we are told, a spendthrift ; but this is not sufficient excuse for Madame de Staël’s having separated from him not many years after their marriage. There is, however, in France, a very convenient law for ladies who make *mariages de convenance* ; the wife may at any time withdraw from her husband on the plea of saving her fortune for her children. Thus, not only the filial, but also the parental virtues are encouraged

to nullify the conjugal ; and when a girl has married for the sake of position, rank, wealth, or what not, and finds that her husband is but a dull companion for her, she has only to allow him to grow extravagant—an easy measure with Frenchmen—to raise a cry of improvidence, separate, and, if she is unprincipled enough, console herself with some one whose society she prefers.

Madame de Staël was sufficiently French to do all but the last. She had sufficient principle and too little beauty to become *galante* after the separation. The baron betook himself betimes to his fatherland, and betimes returned to Paris, but did not interfere with his spouse. It was only in 1802, when he was lying on his death-bed, that his wife rejoined him, nursed him through a severe illness, insisted on his accompanying her to Coppet, and had the satisfaction of seeing him die at Poligny on the way thither, leaving her an eligible widow.

Yet we must not be hard on Madame de Staël for making this match, whatever we may think of her afterwards unmaking it. A young lady of twenty, who should even demur at her parents' choice for her, would in France be considered guilty of utter want of filial respect. Doubtless, Madame Roland, whom we English admire for her independence in this respect, is strongly condemned by her fellow-country-women, and by the mammas especially. Madame de Staël did not approve of such unions. 'I will oblige my daughters to marry for love,' she used to say, though she did not act up to the resolution ; and later in life she herself made a species of marriage of affection, or one at least in which there was great admiration on the one hand. It is amusing to read Madame de Necker-Saussure's comment on this act. 'The inconvenience,' she writes, 'of love-matches is, that they do not originate from choice.' To appreciate this paradox one must be thoroughly imbued with the ideas of French morality, in which the innocent love of a young man and young woman in the hope of marriage is regarded as immodest on the one hand, and an indulgence of passion on the other almost criminal.

As a leader of society, Madame de Staël does not come out in any remarkable degree till many years after her marriage.

Nevertheless, she opened her salons at this period, and her position as Necker's daughter, her wealth, and her wit attracted to them most of the people worth knowing at that time in Paris. Still she had no celebrity ; and, on the other hand, people complained that she was too much of a genius to shine in society. She was always ready to fire off on any subject of interest to herself, however little suited to her interlocutor. Necker was fond of relating, with a hearty laugh, how she had once attacked a stiff old lady of the court, known as the essence of propriety personified, with, ' Pray, madame, what do you think of love ?' She was above etiquette, and would sometimes appear with a torn flounce, or at others without a cap. These terrible crimes made Madame Necker very cross and M. Necker laugh delightedly, but they may have militated against the success of the young married woman in society.

Yet she was quite happy—she was in Paris. To her, as to every real Frenchwoman, Paris was the centre of the world. The Hindu says the same of Delhi ; the Chinaman of Peking ; and we are certain many a true John Bull thinks it of London. But this narrowness, which none but a fool will confound with either patriotism or the true love of country, but which partakes of the same localism which makes Farmer Jones regard the parish he lives in as the only spot of earth ' fit for a Christian,' surprises us in a woman of Madame de Staël's wide experience and general absence of prejudice. At Coppet, one day, her friends drew her attention to the magnificent scenery of the shores of Lake Lemman. ' Show me the Rue du Bac,' said she, turning her head away. ' I would willingly live in Paris on a hundred a year in a lodging up four pairs of stairs.'

Madame de Staël took no share in the events of the Revolution, and had little interest in them when her father resigned for the last time. As his daughter, her political opinions can be easily guessed. She felt no sympathy with, but, we may be sure, much horror at, the terrible cost of liberty in those terrible days, for her heart was always touched by suffering ; but she could not regret the fall of the monarchy. Her chief anxiety was less political than personal ; and the fate of her friends, many of whom belonged to the court, was a matter of great

concern to her. At the final outbreak in August, 1792, she might easily have secured her own safety by a flight to Switzerland; she was, in fact, provided with passports; but she could not leave Paris while her friends were all in danger and she might yet be of use to them. Moreover, her position as wife of the Swedish minister gave her some security, which she even used for their good. Soon after the outbreak, she harboured M. de Narbonne, the ex-minister of war, for whom she was reported to entertain too strong an attachment. A domiciliary visit was made at her house while he was there. She mustered all her courage, and used such dignity to the gens-d'armes, that they retired without making a search. De Narbonne was afterwards supplied with a passport by another friend and escaped to England.

Another of her friends, M. de Jaucourt, had actually been arrested and consigned to the fatal prison of the Abbaye, when she courageously undertook to save him. She found that among the members of the Commune was a literary man, named Manuel, and sought and obtained an interview with him. She could only appeal to his feelings. 'In six months,' she said to him, 'you too may have no power. Save my friend and reserve for yourself one sweet remembrance for the period when you, in your turn, may be proscribed.' The eloquence of the young woman of six-and-twenty succeeded with the Republican; De Jaucourt was set at liberty, and in six months Manuel may have recalled that one act of mercy when on his road to the guillotine.

But her kindness for her friends involved herself in very imminent danger. Little guessing what that day was to be, she had fixed the 2nd of September for her departure from Paris. In order to save the Abbé de Montesquiou, she had given him the passport of one of her servants, and appointed to meet and take him up on the road. The 2nd of September was the first of those fearful days of blood when the name of liberty was befouled for ever in France by the most terrible assassinations which are to be found in the world's history. Assassins, male and female, had been hired to clear the prisons, and they did it. Before the evening of that day the court of every prison was

filled with corpses reeking with blood, and thronged with the vilest of the people, drinking now brandy mixed with gunpowder, now goblets of blood itself. Paris, nor the world, knew no such awful days as those of September, and the stench of blood mounted to heaven with the cries of the tortured victims, to call for judgment on the instigators of this villany. That judgment came in time. Nay, that judgment is still being executed, and France enslaved by an ambitious man, is paying for the insults she offered to humanity in the outraged name of Liberty.

On the morning of that day Madame de Staël set out in a carriage and six. It was a foolish display, and might well have been dispensed with. She was scarcely half way down the street, when a crowd of those wretched female demons, who proved in the Revolution that women can be worse than man when once let loose, surrounded her carriage with cries '*A bas l'aristocrate !*' Very little sufficed to raise a disturbance on that day, and in a few minutes the coach was stopped, the servants overpowered, and Madame de Staël compelled to drive to the Hôtel de Ville, to give an account of herself. The last time she had been there was three years before, when she had listened to the cheers that welcomed her father back to Paris. Who would be fool enough to care for the *vox populi*? who blasphemous enough to repeat that it is *vox Dei*?

When she reached the Hôtel de Ville and alighted, she had to walk through ranks of pikes pointed at her. One brute made a thrust at her, and she was only saved from death by the gendarme who accompanied the prisoner. She was taken before Robespierre, whom she had known at her father's house; but that was nothing to him. She pleaded the right of the Swedish ambassador's wife; but all her eloquence might have been in vain, had not Manuel, of whom we have already spoken, appeared at that moment on the scene. He took her to a private cabinet which looked upon the Place de la Grève before the Hôtel de Ville. Here she saw the terrible bands of assassins, returning from the prisons to be paid in money for their reckless murders, and in the midst of the crowd stood her own carriage. The people were about to tear it to pieces, when a man mounted the box

and defended it by voice and gesture. She was astonished at this piece of unmasked kindness, but in the evening the defender entered her cabinet with Manuel, and turned out to be the wretch Santerre. When she asked him why he had defended her property, he explained that in the days of the famine he had witnessed and shared the distributions of wheat ordered by her father, M. Necker, and could not allow his daughter's property to be destroyed. There was gratitude even in this butcher of his countrymen.

At night her friend Manuel conducted her to her carriage, took his seat beside her, and thus escorted her in safety to her house. The next day he sent her a gendarme to assist her in escaping from Paris. This official turned out to be the famous Tallien, who in less than two years after brought Robespierre to the guillotine. In this manner Madame de Staël escaped to Coppet.

In the following year she went to England. No one has been able to assign any reason for this journey; but it may perhaps be attributed to a lurking affection for M. de Narbonne, the ex-minister, whom, as we have seen, she had rescued, and whom, it is said, she loved. De Narbonne was now in England. A little colony of *émigrés* had planted themselves at Mickleham, near Richmond in Surrey. Among them were Talleyrand, the Duc de Guignes, who had been the French minister at London some years before, Madame de la Châtre, the daughter of Montmorin, who had perished fighting among the pikes of the assassins on the 2nd of September; and M. d'Arblay, who afterwards married Miss Burney, of whom an account is given in this volume under the notice of Madame Piozzi.

Some of these *émigrés* were entirely without means, though belonging to the oldest and wealthiest families in France. Others had succeeded in saving a few hundred pounds, and all shared together in the same friendly house at Mickleham. M. de Narbonne was the richest of them, and paid for all. They managed to buy one small carriage, as there was only room for two in it, the ex-ministers took their turn to mount behind as footmen, when the inmates of the colony wished to drive out

to see the country. In the immediate neighbourhood of Mickleham was Norbury Park, belonging to a Mr. Phillips, whose wife was the sister of Miss Burney. A great friendship soon struck up between the unfortunate *émigrés* and the inmates of the Park, and this ended, *en passant*, in the marriage of Miss Burney to M. d'Arblay, who undertook to teach her French.

Miss Burney's conduct in the matter of Madame de Staël is not without reproach ; but it is quite consistent with her well-known worldliness. She became intimate with the great Frenchwoman, so much so that they wrote numerous little notes to one another, of which we give one as a specimen of Madame de Staël's English at this period.

'When J learned to read english, J begun by milton, to know all or renounce at all in once. J follow the same system in writing my first english letter to Miss burney ; after such an enterprize nothing can affright me. J feel for her so tender a friendship that it melts my admiration, inspires my heart with hope or her indulgence, and impresses me with the idea that in a tongue even unknown, I could express sentiments so deeply felt. my servant will return for a french answer. J entreat Miss Burney to correct the words, but to preserve the sense of that card. best compliments to my dear protectress, Madame Philippe.'

In the next letter she invites Miss Burney to spend a *large* week with her at Juniper Hall.

As most of our readers well know the charming scenery of Richmond, and Mickleham hard by, it is unnecessary for us to describe those beauties of England which these poor emigrants delighted to visit. They certainly deserved some favour of the English people, who were shocked and disgusted at the atrocities of the Revolution, to that extent that even the name of liberty was ostracised for a time in this country. They received little notice or hospitality. Had they come in the days of their glory, with pockets full of louis, and titles well recognized at home, they would have been fêted as 'distinguished foreigners.' They came poor and naked, and the nation of shopkeepers—vulgar to the last—despised them. It was no wonder, then, that the kind inmates of Norbury Park won the

affection of these outcasts by their little attentions. But even Miss Burney, who eventually married one of their number, was not free from worldliness. She was told that reports were circulated that Madame de Staël had, in her house in Paris, entertained the leaders of the Revolution. There is no doubt that some of them were there, such as Robespierre himself, but they were there amongst a crowd of Constitutionalists, all more or less of Necker's opinions, and only on sufferance. Nevertheless, after an intimate friendship for a short time, Miss Burney thought fit to withdraw. Later, when she was in Paris, Madame de Staël, pure from any vindictive feeling, wrote to offer to renew her acquaintance, and Miss Burney returned a letter, which she considered a perfect specimen of diplomatic refusal, but which we can now calmly call extremely vulgar. But then Miss Burney *was* a vulgar woman, and if any one doubts it, let them read her Diary and Letters.

But the friendship or enmity of that vain little creature, whose much lauded Diary is after all nothing but a series of the most egotistical sketches, made little difference to the bulk of the French colony, among whom were M. Lally Tollendal, Lafayette, the Princess d'Henin, the Princess de Poix, and Guibert, the author, who, Madame de Staël confessed to Mrs. Phillips, had been very much in love with her before she was married. The whole party lived on most amicable terms, as fellows in misfortune, and amused themselves very well in spite of their want of means, which obliged them to sell their jewels and lace, to teach their native language, or even, later, to take menial offices. They engaged a gentleman to teach them English, made excursions together, and invited their English neighbours to Mickleham, with more hospitality, perhaps, than economic prudence.

On all these occasions Madame de Staël was the leader, in virtue of her wit and good spirits; and the portion of Miss Burney's correspondence which refers to the French colony, is divided between her and M. d'Arblay. Yet the refugees were not to be left in peace at Mickleham. England, which now boasts itself the refuge of political destitutes, sent Talleyrand

to America, with a very peremptory order. De Narbonne also left, and Madame de Staël returned to Coppet.

With great energy she now devoted herself to the succour of the many unfortunate exiles who crowded Switzerland, like the ghosts of former glory, and to the vague hope of reconciling France and England, with which she published two pamphlets on the questions of the day.

Many a great reputation or great success results from a disheartening check. Napoleon Bonaparte, a young, unknown, and insignificant soldier, lost his appointment in the army on the overthrow of Robespierre. This loss made him Emperor of the French, when he might otherwise have been nothing but an obscure soldier. It brought him up to Paris, to get another post. He saw Barras, Barras saw him. Barras saw not the mere soldier, but the future Emperor of the French, the conqueror of Europe. He kept him in Paris, and the young Bonaparte's fame was secured.

It was not probable that the daughter of Necker, the friend of constitutional liberty, should adhere very ardently to the encroaching policy of General Bonaparte, as year after year his brief, brilliant campaigns raised him a step higher in influence at Paris. Still, Madame de Staël had returned to Paris, had opened her salon, and her mouth, and not only could not avoid the first man of the day, but even sought him out to tackle him with her wit. She found her match in the blunt, rude soldier. 'Whom do you think the greatest woman, dead or alive?' she asked him, with that direct mode of attack which was her peculiar characteristic, and made her society often, as Byron thought it, rather oppressive. 'Her, madame,' replied the general, 'who has born the most sons.' 'They say you are not very friendly to the sex,' she resumed. 'I am passionately fond of my wife,' said he, and off he walked.

Still Napoleon was justly afraid of her bitter truths. 'She has shafts,' he said, some years later, 'which would hit a man if he were seated on a rainbow.' Madame de Staël had more than one occasion of testing her powers with the great man. Thus when he was preparing for the invasion of Switzerland, which was almost to her as a native country, she sought an in-

terview with him, and in a *tête-à-tête* of an hour attempted to dissuade him from such an unjustifiable step. He listened attentively, but was, of course, by no means convinced; and Madame de Staël could have known very little of this man, or been very confident of her own powers, to suppose for a moment that she could turn him from any fixed purpose.

Necker was still living at Coppet, and, as a prescribed *émigré*, would have been involved in the fate of the Swiss. His wife was dead, and his daughter hastened to him and attempted in vain to induce him to leave the château and fly to a securer spot. The event proved that he was right to remain there. The French troops entered by the Canton Vaud, and passed close to Coppet; but a message from the Directoire informed M. Necker that his life and freedom would be respected during the invasion. The inhabitants of Coppet listened to the sound of the cannon which was borne to them through alpine echoes from Berne, a distance of nearly eighty miles, and the old Genevan knew well enough that his native land was destined to become an appanage of his adopted country.

Madame de Staël returned to Paris about the same time that Napoleon came back in triumph from Egypt, and made his first great steps towards absolute power, backed by the army. She reopened her salon, which was now crowded with all that party which, like herself, dreaded the increasing influence of this new man, and looked with regret on the decay of the republic, which they had imagined to be well and firmly established. Among her guests was Joseph Bonaparte, for whom she entertained a sincere regard. The First Consul gathered from his brother something of the principles of the most popular drawing-room in Paris, and felt that here was a rival to his own popularity among the educated classes of the metropolis. The great-little man was not above jealousy of such a woman, and tried to attach her to himself.

‘What does she want?’ he said to Joseph. ‘Her father’s two millions? She shall have them. Leave to stay in Paris? She shall remain. What *does* she want? Why does she not join *us*?’

When Joseph reported this to his friend, in the hope of

bringing her round to his brother's party, she replied, 'The difficulty, monsieur, is not what I want, but what I *think*.'

The popularity of her salon was not increased by the speech in the senate of Benjamin Constant, the famous journalist, who there denounced the First Consul, without specifying him by name, as aspiring to arbitrary power. Madame de Staël was suspected of having prompted this speech, and the next day her salon was empty, and she was recommended by the minister, Fouché, to 'retire for a few days to the country.' At this period, both Lucien and Joseph Bonaparte were as frequent visitors at Madame de Staël's as at her intimate friend, Madame Récamier's. Joseph was her especial favourite, and it will well be understood how completely the conqueror of Switzerland, Egypt, and Italy dreaded the tongue and independent spirit of this one woman, when it is known that he even warned his brother, soon after the speech of Constant, to desist from his visits, which of course he did. It is from the day on which this speech was made that Madame de Staël dates the hostility of the future emperor. Constant was known to be her intimate friend. It was known that he had apprized her of his intention; and she confesses that she had encouraged him strenuously to deliver the speech which created so much sensation.

From this period, therefore, Madame de Staël's life has as great a political as literary importance, and her salons may be regarded in the light of Napoleon's *cauchemar*. There is no doubt that this independent woman, who looked with natural apprehension on his increasing power, was one of the few people who withstood it by all the means in her reach. As the wife of the Swedish ambassador, she collected in her salons the leading politicians of all colours; but as the Revolution had driven out of France all but its own adherents, the parties now in Paris were reduced to those who saw the power of the First Consul on the increase and bowed to it, whether from fear or motives of interest, and those who, seeing it, longed in vain to oppose it.

The latter was by no means a large party. Every one was weary of the Revolution, and despised the Directoire. The most zealous republicans regarded Napoleon as the restorer of

order: even Madame de Staël herself, at this period, dreaded his future rather than objected to his present measures. His great enemies were the remnant of the aristocratic party, who still hoped for the restoration of the Bourbons: but this party was in exile; and they destroyed all sympathy felt for them in France, while they only strengthened the power and increased the popularity of the First Consul, by the disgraceful attempt to assassinate him by an infernal machine.

But whether to Napoleonists or Republicans, Madame de Staël expressed her political opinions openly and with all the force for which she was celebrated in conversation. As the Tribunal was still a free body, any such influence in Paris, as would encourage the opposition to him in that house, was naturally dreaded by the ambitious tyrant, and the salon of this clever and independent woman became virtually a rival establishment to the Tuileries.

In this political atmosphere Madame de Staël passed the first two or three years of the century, varied only by visits to her father at Coppet, and her own literary labours, which added greatly to her celebrity, although attacked by the press. In the meanwhile the First Consul, though busied with his projected invasion of England, was on the watch for any opportunity to get rid of so influential a foe; but as liberty of speech was not then denied to the talkers of Paris, there was for a long time nothing that he could take hold of. At length, however, Necker, who had been long working in retirement at Coppet, published the result of his labours in a work entitled 'Last Views of Politics and Finance,' which gave great umbrage to the First Consul. It was somewhat cowardly on his part to visit the sin of the father, whom he could not safely touch, on the daughter's head; yet this he did, and Necker was warned that Madame de Staël would no longer be tolerated in Paris. She was at Coppet at this time; and though about to return to Paris, she preferred to take up her abode at a small country house about ten leagues from the capital. Here she was visited by the few friends who could find time to come so far. But though thus in retirement, she was not allowed to remain in peace. Some woman, from some private motive, reported to the First Consul

that the road to her house was positively covered with her numerous visitors. Though this was perfectly false, Napoleon was delighted to find a pretext for banishing his clever opponent; and with her began the warfare which he was not ashamed to make upon the women of France, as he had upon the armies of her enemies. Towards the end of September she received by a commandant of gendarmerie an order to retire to a distance of forty leagues from Paris, and not approach the capital within a circle of that radius. This was the fashionable mode of exile at that day, when the offence was not sufficiently marked to justify a banishment from the country. It gratified the spite of the tyrant, who well knew that a Parisian is miserable out of Paris; and as the distance was too great to allow the exile to enjoy frequent personal communication with friends in the metropolis, the sentence destroyed her influence without appearing to the public to be very severe.

To Madame de Staël this was the commencement of an exile which lasted ten years. To the woman who preferred a small room in the Rue du Bac to a château in the lovely scenery of Lake Lemman, this was indeed a terrible hardship. 'You see,' she said to the gendarme, 'the consequences of being a *femme d'esprit*; and I would recommend you, if there is occasion, to dissuade any females of your family from attempting it.' It was true enough: the Great Napoleon, to some people the greatest hero of the modern world, had banished this woman because she was clever. He lived to regret it. He not only made an enemy of one of the best authors of France; but in after-years, when he had established a court, and wished to surround himself with wit and talent, as he had already done with rank, he would have given anything to have conciliated the exile.

He could create dukes, counts, and marquises, but there his power ceased. He could not create minds, make wits, and dub authors.

The exile was a terrible blow to Madame de Staël. She was essentially the woman of society, and Paris was the only place where it could be found. She was undoubtedly vain of her intellectual powers. It cannot be denied that to hear herself

talk was a keen enjoyment to her; that is, if she had a masterly mind to cope with, for as for the stupid, she held them low indeed. The society of thinkers was the only atmosphere in which she could breathe freely. She declared that exile, which kept her from it, was simply death to her.

With this feeling she looked about for a refuge where she could enjoy the commerce of men of intellect. The capital which, of all others, contained at this period the most remarkable was Weimar. The three greatest thinkers of Germany were residents there—Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland. The duke, celebrated as the Mæcenas of modern Europe, was only too glad to have the author of ‘*Delphine*’ among the lights of his capital, and received her enthusiastically. She studied German diligently; she talked to Goethe and Wieland in French, which they spoke well, and to Schiller, who could scarcely speak it at all, in broken phrases; in short, she made the first of those notes and observations which were afterwards to appear in her celebrated work ‘*De l’Allemagne*.’

From Weimar she repaired to Berlin, where she became very intimate with the Prince Louis-Ferdinand of Prussia. It was he who first informed her of Napoleon’s murder of the poor young Duc d’Enghien, the descendant of the great Condé. The whole circumstances of this heartless affair are too well known to need recapitulation here. Suffice it to say, that this act made Napoleon more enemies than all his despotism, or all the bayonets of all his armies. In the ‘*Moniteur*’ of the following day the assassination was coolly announced as the judicial execution of ‘the person called Louis d’Enghien.’ The next note which the Prince Louis-Ferdinand sent to Madame de Staël began in parody of this: ‘The person called Louis de Prusse begs Madame de Staël,’ &c. This murder made Madame de Staël more than ever the foe of Bonaparte.

Another friendship which she first formed in Berlin was more worth having than that of the prince. We refer to old August-Wilhelm von Schlegel. This man was of the old school of German erudition, which was somewhat less pedantic, less narrow, and more polished than that of modern men of learning in Germany. He was by no means wrapt up in the dead world, though he went as deeply, if not more deeply, into its ashes

than any contemporary scholar, adding to his classical attainments a profound knowledge of Sanskrit, then the most difficult oriental language to acquire, owing to the absence of grammars and the small number of texts published ; yet in spite of these obstacles Schlegel made one of the earliest translations of a Sanskrit work, and published an edition of the original, which still holds the first place. But he had sufficient enlargement of mind to appreciate the excellence of modern literature ; his acquaintance with modern languages was great ; he wrote French just with the same facility as his native tongue, and had a thorough knowledge of English and Italian, and of the whole literature of Europe. To these acquirements—common, perhaps, in the present day, but at that time very rare—he added great critical ability, and a love of art as well as of literature.

Madame de Staël seized the opportunity which her acquaintance with this eminent man afforded her to place her son under his tuition ; but Auguste de Staël seems to have inherited his father's Swedish solidity rather than his mother's brilliant talents ; and the grandson of Necker, the son of the author of 'Corinne' and the pupil of Schlegel, passed in society, when he grew up, as an ordinary mortal. We cannot wonder : it is a rare thing to find genius and high intellect in three successive generations of the same family : it seems as if the mental energy exhausted itself after arriving at its prime in a parent. How many a wise man begets fools ; how many a clever brain is succeeded by a dullard ; and how often, as in the case of Chesterfield, the utmost care and anxiety in a parent fail to make a child what its father has been !

The death of Necker, in 1804, recalled Madame de Staël to Coppet. She was too late to witness the last moments of her idolized parent ; and her desolation was complete. In this father and his fame her early life had been wrapped up. The tenderness between this parent and this daughter is often touching. In his later years she had been his adviser and assistant ; and in his last illness he had written—in vain of course—to the First Consul to assure him that his daughter had no share in his own obnoxious work, and to implore, in mercy, the cancelling of her sentence. She testified her love and reverence

in a manner which was the best in her power, and soon after his death wrote the story of the well-finished life, raising him on the highest pedestal of her admiration.

Madame de Staël was now nearly forty years of age : but years with her increased her charms, which were those of intellect and conversation. Her beauty, if we may so call it, was of a kind which improves with time. All depended on the expression, and this seemed to gather animation as her mind developed and the events of her varied life gave fresh fire to the soul within. Everything fitted her at this time to shine in the society of her beloved Paris, but this she was denied. She was not only an exile, but alone in the world. Her mother had gone first, then her husband, and, lastly, the one relation whom she loved best. All that was left to her was France ; and as Paris was forbidden ground, that country was shut up to her.

Under these circumstances she set out for Italy accompanied by Schlegel, her son's tutor, whose antiquarian knowledge made him a most valuable companion in that land which is a tomb beneath a palace. Her romantic character was fitted to receive all the impressions which that land can give, sad and solemn as they are ; her health needed the soft air of the south : the warmth and enthusiasm of the Italian character charmed her after the stolid cogitateness of the Germans ; and as she had before done among the latter, she now among the former made those keen observations which were to give to her best novel the charm that delighted all Europe on its appearance.

In the following year she returned to France ; but, not willing to brook a fresh struggle with the master of a hundred legions, she remained in quiet obscurity at Auxerre, where her son Auguste, then a boy of sixteen, was put to school. She even ventured, now that she thought she was forgotten by her persecutor, to within twelve leagues of the proscribed city. She then published '*Corinne*,' a book of travel in the guise of a novel, of which she herself was the heroine. It made the greatest sensation all over Europe. As an instance of this, we are told that in Edinburgh the professors of the university used to stop one another in the street to ask how far each had read of the great new work.

Though politics were scarcely touched upon in this novel, Napoleon was annoyed by its success. 'No matter what she writes,' said he, 'political or not ; after reading her, people hate me.' Perhaps he was jealous of his enemy's intellectual powers, just as Louis Quatorze was of those of Madame de Sévigné. She must be a partisan of his or nobody. It was not easy to quench Madame de Staël, but the great man did what he could, and on the 9th of April, 1807, the anniversary of her father's death, she received a fresh order of exile.

This decided her to go to Vienna that she might complete her observations on Germany. Here she passed about a year, well received in spite of her proscription, by both the court and 'the society.' But she could not put up with the stolid Teutons, heavy even in their vices, their tedious etiquette, their everlasting dinners, their elaborate dressings, their stupid pride, and their utter want of wit and all that refinement of mind, which, even more than wit, characterises the better class of French society.

She passed the next two years at Coppet, completing her work on Germany, in tranquil retirement, and shunned by all those neighbours who dreaded to draw down the wrath of the great man in the gray coat at Paris. When the work was ready, she drew nearer to Paris, and pitched her tent this time in the beautiful historical château of Chaumont-sur-Loire, the proprietor of which, a friend and connection of her family, was in America. His return obliged her, with her sons and daughter, to move to a little farm called Le Fossé, which was lent to her by her friend M. de Salaberry.

Here, as we have mentioned in the memoir of Madame Récamier, she was joined by that celebrated beauty, who had for many years been her intimate friend. She also collected round her some few others of her oldest and best friends, Adrien and Matthieu de Montmorency, who afterwards figured so prominently under the Restoration ; Benjamin Constant, true to his name with her, though not with politics ; M. de Barante, and others. The society of these old friends, whose political sentiments and common hostility to the empire united them in a bond of sympathy, was easy enough, and their conversation

must have been brilliant. All of them except Madame Récamier were authors ; all had taken a prominent part in the events of their day ; all were thinkers and talkers.

A strange fancy took them, however, for the manner of passing their afternoons. After dinner they seated themselves round a table, and in complete silence wrote to each other charming little notes containing the ideas that were passing in their minds. The 'Penny Post,' as they called it, so completely absorbed them, that they did not interrupt it, even when strangers came in. Thus on one occasion a gentleman of the neighbourhood, a sturdy hunting man who passed his life in the woods, entered from the chase in his usual costume, with his huge horn wound round his body, as it is worn to this day in France. He stared in amazement at the silent literary party, and could make nothing of it. Madame Récamier good-naturedly thought to set him at his ease, and wrote him a little note, such as a Parisian would have died to possess from the celebrated beauty. The sportsman, however, shook his head, declined to receive it, and excused himself on the plea that he could never read writing by daylight. 'We laughed a little,' says Madame de Staël, 'at the disappointment which the benevolent coquetry of our beautiful friend had met with, and thought that a billet from her hand would not always have met with the same fate.'

But even this harmless party was soon to be broken up by the hatred of Napoleon. Madame de Staël had a most fatal celebrity. One evening she went to see a little opera at the small theatre at Blois. As she left it on foot, she was followed by a crowd of curious people, anxious to get a good sight of the celebrated exile. The stupid police wrote that she was 'surrounded by a court.' Soon after this she put the last line to her work on Germany, which had taken her six years to write, and was in high spirits at the thought of its appearance. She had made arrangements with a publisher in Paris ; the book had passed with a few corrections through the hands of the public censor ; its popularity was expected to be so great, that no less than ten thousand copies were printed for the first edition ; all seemed to be going on well, when the persecutor again pounced down upon her, the whole of the edition was

destroyed by the police, and to put the *comble* upon it all, the author was ordered to quit France in three days for ever.

Miserable, and in despair, she returned once more to Coppet. In what spot could the broken spirit of genius, silenced in its greatest work by a vulgar jealous hand, find better rest? Coppet, the retreat of Necker, later the home of troops of exiles—later again, the gay scene where Madame de Staël collected her best friends, where the young Prince August of Prussia had made love to the beautiful Récamier—Coppet was on the banks of Lake Leman.

Leman is the haunt of genius. Every corner of this lovely lake has nestled a poet or philosopher. Here are the white walls of Chillon; here the one green island,

‘A little isle,
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view.’

Here Byron, broken down by ‘home desolation,’ spread in vain the broad lateen sail of his boat from shore to shore, unable to rise from his misery. Here Gibbon, in his garden summer-house, had put the last line to his magnificent history, and strolled alone in the long covered acacia walk, nursing a dream of fame. Here even Shelley had a cottage; and the city which harboured the Deist, had heard the stern fierce voice of fanatic Calvin. Lastly, the souls of the Revolution were here, Rousseau and Voltaire. Yes; Voltaire is here in his best light, in the little colony of Ferney, which he founded himself and attempted to civilize. Here is the little theatre in which his own plays were acted, and opposite to it the church—yes, the church—which he himself erected, and which bore the inscription—erased by some blind fools—‘Deo erexit Voltaire.’ For Voltaire, cynic, satirist, sneerer, mass of vanity, mocker of Christianity, was not an Atheist. He believed in God, and more—he, who saw the evils of Romanism, the darkness of its superstitions, the narrowing tyranny of its exactions, yet admitted that religion, even the observance of religion, nay, even public worship, was necessary to the well-being of a community, and for his own pet colony erected a *church*. Can we justly blame Voltaire, if those who set him up as their model of belief, in

later years proclaimed atheism by an edict and shut up the churches of France?

Surely, then, Leman, with all these associations, and all that beauty which Byron has immortalized in the lines we quote, should have sufficed to calm her spirit.

Clear placid Leman ! thy contrasted lake
 With the wild world I dwell in is a thing
 Which warns me with its stillness to forsake
 Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
 This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
 To waft me from destruction : once I loved
 The ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
 Sounds sweet, as if a sister's voice reproved,
 That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

It is the hush of night, and all between
 Thy margin and the mountains dusk yet clear,
 Mellowed and mingled, yet distinctly seen,
 Save darkened Jura, whose capt heights appear
 Precipitously steep ; and drawing near,
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore
 Of flowers yet fresh with childhood ! on the ear
 Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more.'

The village of Coppet is a mere nothing ; the château a plain building, interesting chiefly for its associations. But let us be permitted to quote the description given of it by that charming writer, Sir E. Lytton, in 'The Student.'

'The road to Coppet from Ferney is pretty but monotonous. You approach the house by a field or paddock, which reminds you of England. To the left, in a thick copse, is the tomb of Madame de Staël. As I saw it, how many of her eloquent thoughts on the weariness of life rushed to my memory ! No one perhaps ever felt more palpably the stirrings of the soul within, than her whose dust lay there. Few had ever longed more intently for the wings to flee away and be at rest. She wanted precisely that which Voltaire had—common sense. She had precisely that which Voltaire wanted—sentiment. * * * And now the house is before you. Opposite the entrance iron gates admit a glimpse of grounds laid out in the English fashion. The library opens at once from the hall, a long and handsome room containing a statue of Necker ; the forehead of the minister is low, and the face has in it more of *bonhomme*

than *esprit*. In fact that very respectable man was a little too dull for his position. The windows look out on a gravel walk or terrace ; the library communicates with a bedroom hung with old tapestry.

‘In the *salle à manger* on the first floor is a bust of A. W. Schlegel and a print of Lafayette. Out of the billiard-room, the largest room in the suite, is the room where Madame de Staël usually slept, and frequently wrote, though the good woman who did the honours declared “she wrote in *all* the rooms.” Her writing indeed was but an episode of her conversation. * * * On the other side of the billiard-room is a small salon, in which there is a fine bust of Necker, a picture of Baron de Staël, and one of herself in a turban. Every one knows that countenance, full of power if not of beauty, with deep dark eyes. Here is still shown her writing-book and inkstand. Throughout the whole house is an air of English comfort and quiet opulence. The furniture is plain and simple ; nothing overpowers the charm of the place ; and no undue magnificence diverts you from the main thought of the genius to which it is consecrated. The grounds are natural, but not remarkable. A very narrow but fresh streamlet borders them to the right.’

The château is now the property of Madame de Staël-Vernet. This description is not very attractive, and when we add that the château is so placed as *not* to command a view of the lake, we may perhaps forgive Madame de Staël for preferring the Rue du Bac.

Here the exile was subject to a series of annoyances unworthy of her great foe, and cruelly aggravating her banishment. One Préfet of Geneva was dismissed as being too civil to her ; the next took care to exceed his duty in the opposite direction. She was forbidden to travel. She consoled herself with the society of Schlegel, who for eight years had been educating her son. It was discovered that the friendship of this great man was some consolation to her, and he was ordered summarily to quit Coppet. No offence was imputed to him, except that in an essay he had given the preference to the ‘Phædra’ of Euripides over the ‘Phèdre’ of Racine !

But the vengeance of Bonaparte was not satisfied with these persecutions. He determined that the poor woman, whose chief crime lay in having refused to join his party, should be bereft of all her friends. Matthieu de Montmorency visited her at Coppet. The day of his arrival the Préfet of Geneva wrote to Paris to announce it. The return of the mail brought him an order of exile. Madame Récamier, on her way to the baths of Aix, would not be persuaded not to enter the doomed house, but had scarcely set her foot in it when she too was condemned to the same fate. Saint-Priest, the ex-minister of Louis XVI., and an old man of seventy-eight, was living at Geneva. In spite of Madame de Staël's entreaties, he insisted on visiting her in her affliction. In the depth of winter he was banished from Switzerland for this act of friendship. As the climax to all this a gendarme was set to watch Madame de Staël in all her movements, and thus even her home was made wretched to her.

Thus robbed of all her friends, and reduced to almost complete solitude, she claims some indulgence for an extraordinary step which she now took.

In 1810, when she first returned to Coppet, there was staying in Geneva a young soldier of the name of Rocca. He had been in the Spanish campaign, and received wounds which prostrated him, and which, indeed, eventually hastened his death. His tottering walk, his pale hollow cheeks, his look of suffering, contrasted with his youth and handsome face, made him an object of interest to the good people of Geneva. Madame de Staël's tender heart was touched by the sight of his misery, and she felt that in her own she had a fellow-feeling for him. She attempted to cheer him, and her kindness and the charm of her conversation appear to have had such effect upon the invalid that he told one of his friends that 'he would love her so, that she would at length marry him.' How the courtship proceeded we know not, but if he was grateful for a little compassion, Madame de Staël was melted by the attachment of this stranger at a time when old friends even deserted her. He succeeded at last, and she married him. She was at this period in her forty-fifth year; she was old enough to be his

mother ; the match was no doubt an extraordinary, by no means an admirable one. But here our blame would cease, if it were not for what followed. She consented to marry him, on condition that the union should remain secret. Her motive for this cannot be known. Whether she desired to preserve the name by which she was celebrated ; whether she feared that her great foe would take even her husband from her : or whether, as is quite as probable, she felt that there was something ridiculous in the union of a woman of nearly fifty with a boy but little older than her own children, we cannot tell. To conceal a marriage is to tell society a lie. We cannot acquit Madame de Staël in this matter, and her warmest admirers have blamed her. Yet we are rather inclined to pity the persecuted woman, and to remember that society had thrown her aside, and that she owed but little to it now.

This union brought her some little happiness, but the almost incomprehensible oppression of the emperor left her no rest. She was assailed by the pettiest and most unworthy persecutions, the only object of which could be to render her life, even in its retirement, utterly miserable and unbearable. They nearly succeeded in this end, and at one moment the unhappy woman meditated suicide. The consequence presents a curious example of the conquest that a strong and well-biassed mind can gain over the deepest depression of the spirit. Madame Roland, when in a similar position, *prepared for* suicide. Madame de Staël never did more than meditate upon it. She put before herself the arguments on both sides of the question ; she sought undoubtedly for some palliative for this unpunishable crime. But her mind was too well balanced to admit the existence of any ; and the only consequence of her meditations was an essay against suicide. Madame Roland had rejected the idea for the sake of her daughter. Madame de Staël rejected it for the sake of her God. The comparison holds good. Both were Frenchwomen, and educated about the same period, surrounded with the same public opinions on the subject. At the period of the Revolution, the act

* Which Cato practised, Addison approved.*

was considered a deed worthy of a hero. It was at least held that when a man found himself in a position of degradation from external and inevitable causes, he had a right to leave the world; and the courage (so it was called) which the deed required ennobled him in his last moments. Unhappily, this erroneous idea is not yet exploded in France; and when we find M. Lamartine praising Roland for his suicide, and claiming a hero's niche for him for that one act alone, we may well appreciate the superior principle which deterred Madame de Staël from attempting it. We may well believe that her Protestant education, and her deep religious feeling, aided her in these terrible moments.

She took a much more sensible course. She fled beyond the power of the man who tried to weary her of her life. This flight was not accomplished without imminent dangers. Its story is almost romantic, but we have not space to go into its details. Suffice it to say that she was aided by M. Schlegel, and accompanied by her son, daughter, and husband. She fled through the Tyrol to Vienna, and so through Poland to Russia. The moment her departure was discovered, orders were sent after her for her arrest. The stupidity of German officials alone preserved the party. M. Rocca was even compelled to adopt a disguise; and on one occasion they were shackled by the attendance of a police official, who would not allow them to stay more than a specified time at any place, and ate immoderately. The *Hegira* was, however, effected after many alarms and perils; and the party reached Russia, which was the only country, besides England, in which, at that time, they could be free from their oppressor.

At St. Petersburg, Madame de Staël was well received by the emperor and the nobility. Her hostility to Napoleon was well known. She was, in fact, almost the only French subject of any note who stood out against him. All her old friends had given in to his rule, and even sought employment under him.

But Russia was not the destination she longed to reach. Her wishes were centred on free England, where she had once tasted the charms of perfect liberty combined with order, and where she was sure to find so many valuable and faithful

friends. England, which had been Necker's Utopia, was now her dream, and she only waited till her health was recruited to set out for this country.

She arrived here in June, 1813, and took up her abode at No. 30, Argyll Street, Regent Street, a locality which may then have been more fashionable than it is at present. The house she lived in was afterwards converted into an establishment for medicated vapour baths.

Now began those last four years of her life which were its most brilliant period. Her reputation was far greater now than it had been in the days of Juniper Hall. Politically she was celebrated for the persecutions she had endured, and as the only person of any importance who had stood firm against Napoleon to the last. This would have been title enough to the esteem of English politicians; but her two greatest works, 'Corinne' and 'De l'Allemagne' landed her in the thick of thinkers and literary men.

She was the lioness of that season, and seems to have known it, for she says, in reference to the supposed coldness of the English: 'They are like the Albanian dogs sent by Porus to Alexander, which disdained to fight any animal but a lion.' Certainly the lioness found plenty of English mastiffs of the noblest breed to fight with her in amicable discussion.

The first of these was Mackintosh, 'the brightest constellation of the North,' as Lord Byron calls him, one of the most amiable, accomplished, and agreeable men of his day whose only fault, perhaps, was that he could never be severe. Madame de Staël had translated his celebrated speech in defence of Peltier some years before, and she felt that he was the friend of those whom Napoleon persecuted. He became her most intimate friend, and thus writes of her:—

'On my return I found the whole fashionable and literary world occupied with Madame de Staël, * * * the most celebrated woman of this, or perhaps any age. * * * She treats me as the person she most delights to honour. I am generally ordered with her to dinner, as one orders beans and bacon.' This was quite true, as we learn from Byron's letters, where 'the Staëls and Mackintoshes' are always mentioned together;

but which was the beans and which the bacon we cannot pretend to decide. 'I have, in consequence,' he continues, 'dined with her at the houses of almost all the cabinet ministers. She is one of the few persons who surpass expectation. She has every sort of talent, and would be universally popular if in society she were to confine herself to her inferior talents—pleasantry, anecdote, and literature, which are so much more suited to conversation than her eloquence and genius.'

This is perfectly just, and Madame de Staël's chief fault in society was undoubtedly that of declaiming with too much enthusiasm on political or even philosophical questions. She had a mode, too, of direct attack, which the calm English could not always relish, and which Byron, as we shall see, particularly disliked.

'I saw Lord Wellesley fight a very good battle with her,' continues Mackintosh, 'at Holland House, on the Swedish treaty; indeed, he had the advantage of her, by the politeness, vivacity, and grace with which he parried her eloquent declamations and unseasonable discussions.'

Tact, the button on the foil of conversation, seems, in Madame de Staël's case, to have been whipped off by her enthusiasm.

In the previous July, Byron writes to Moore: 'The Staël last night attacked me most furiously; said I had "no right" to make love; that I had used——most barbarously; that I had no feeling, and was totally *insensible* to *la belle passion*, and *had* been all my life. I am very glad to hear it, but did not know it before.'

She was the most popular guest at Lansdowne House and Holland House. Lords Grey, Harroby, Erskine, and Jersey were alternately her hosts and guests. At Rogers' literary dinners she always had her seat; and Byron and Mackintosh, nay, all the leading men of the day in politics or literature, were her intimates. We are told that to the houses of these celebrities people were invited on purpose to see the authoress of 'Corinne'; that they mounted on chairs and tables to get a view of her; and that, in short, she was as great a curiosity in London as Napoleon himself could have been.

Her vanity—of which she had, we must own, a fair share—must have been flattered to the utmost by these attentions ; but in the midst of her success came a blow which destroyed all her enjoyment. Her elder son and daughter were with her, the former popular on account of his excellent English, the latter admired for her musical powers ; but the younger son was in Germany. He had joined the army banded against his mother's persecutor ; but his fiery temper led him into a quarrel, a duel ensued, and the young Albert de Staël was laid low. Lord Byron, in his usual playful manner, alludes characteristically to this event.

'Madame de Staël-Holstein has lost one of her young barons, who has been carbonadoed by a vile Teutonic adjutant—kilt and killed at a coffee-house at Scrawsenhausen. Corinne is, of course, what all mothers must be, but will, I venture to prophesy, do what few mothers could, *write an essay upon it*. She cannot exist without a grievance, and somebody to see, or read, how much grief becomes her.'

This may have contained some truth ; but Byron was the last person who ought to have raised the sneer. He was, of all others, the man who most loved a grievance, especially a domestic one ; and was always ready to write, and publish, a poem upon his misery. Yet we may doubt if the remark was made in an ill-natured spirit, for he rather liked 'De l'Allemagne,' as he calls her, in spite of her want of tact. His subsequent notices are much in the same strain ; but some of them are so characteristic, and, allowing for a little exaggeration, so just, that we cannot help giving a few of them from his journal.

'Nov. 17th, 1813.—Last night at Lord H——'s ; Mackintosh, the Ossulstones, Puységur, &c., there. I was trying to recollect a quotation (as I think) of Staël's from some Teutonic sophist about architecture. "Architecture," says this Macaronico Tedescho, "reminds one of frozen music." It is somewhere ; but where?—the demon of perplexity must know, and won't tell. I asked M——, and he said it was not in her ; but P——r said it must be *hers* ; it was so *like*. H—— laughed, as he does at all "De l'Allemagne," in which, however, I think he goes a little too far. But there are fine passages ;

and, after all, what is a work, any—or every work—but a desert with fountains, and perhaps a grove or two, every day's journey? To be sure, in Madame, what we often mistake and “pant for,” as the “cooling stream,” turns out to be a *mirage* (criticè, *verbiage*); but we do, at last, get to something like the temple of Jove Ammon, and then the waste we have passed is only remembered to gladden the contrast.’

‘Nov. 30th.—To-day (Tuesday) a very pretty billet from Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein. She is pleased to be much pleased with my mention of her and her last works in my notes. I spoke as I thought. Her works are my delight, and so is she herself—for half an hour. * * * But she is a woman by herself, and has done more than all the rest of them together, intellectually. She ought to have been a man. She *flatters* me very prettily in her note; but I *know* it.’

‘She ought to have been a man,’ reminds us of the anecdote of Talleyrand. Madame de Staël asked him if he had read her ‘Delphine.’ ‘Non,’ he replied, ‘mais on m’a dit que nous y sommes tous les deux déguisés en femmes.’ She had described herself in ‘Delphine’ with a plentiful addition of personal beauty, wanting in the original, and Talleyrand in the old countess. The reply must have been too much even for Madame de Staël.

Her admiration of Byron was unlimited. Thus, on December 5th, he writes: ‘Asked for Wednesday to dine and meet the Staël—asked particularly, I believe, out of mischief, to see the first interview after the *note*, with which Corinne professes herself to be much taken. I don’t much like it; she always talks of *myself* and *herself*; and I am not (except in soliloquy) much enamoured of either subject—especially one’s works. What the devil shall I say about “De l’Allemagne?” I like it prodigiously; but unless I can twist my admiration into some fantastical expression, she won’t believe me; and I know by experience, I shall be overwhelmed with fine things about rhyme, &c., &c. The lover, Mr. — was there to-night, and C—— said “it was the only proof *he* had seen of her good taste.” Monsieur l’Amnant is remarkably handsome; but I don’t think more so than her book.’ This, we presume, refers

to Rocca, whom she had not yet acknowledged as her husband; nor did she so until on her death-bed, even to her own children. Byron goes on in this place to praise her book, which he confesses he read again and again.

In another place he calls her 'a very good-natured creature,' which undoubtedly she was. On December 10th he writes, after meeting her at a most distinguished dinner at Lord H——'s: 'The Staël was at the other end of the table, and less loquacious than heretofore. We are now very good friends, though she asked Lady Melbourne whether I had really any *bonhomie*. She might as well have asked that question before she told C. L., "C'est un demon." True enough, but rather premature, for *she* could not have found it out, and so——she wants me to dine there next Sunday.' 'Jan. 16, 1814.—I saw Lewis to-day, who is just returned from Oatlands, where he has been squabbling with Madame de Staël about himself, Clarissa Harlowe, Mackintosh, and me. My homage has never been paid in that quarter, or he would have agreed still worse. I don't talk, I can't flatter, and won't listen, except to a pretty or foolish woman. She bored Lewis with praises of himself till he sickened—found out that Clarissa was perfection, and Mackintosh the first man in England. * * * She told Lewis wisely, he being my friend, that I was affected, in the first place, and that, in the next place, I committed the heinous offence of sitting at dinner with my *eyes* shut, or half shut. * * * I wonder if I really have this trick. I must cure myself of it, if true. * * * It would not so much signify if one was always to be checkmated by a plain woman; but one may as well see some of one's neighbours as well as the plate on the table.' He calls her 'obstinate, clever, odd, garrulous and shrill,' and adds, 'Poor Corinne! she will find that some of her fine sayings won't suit our fine ladies and gentlemen.'

Her love of talking, especially with men, was well known. Byron says, in speaking of a dinner party he was at: 'We got up too soon after the women, and Mrs. Corinne always lingers so long after dinner, that we wish her in——the drawing-room.'

Her society in London was too mixed to suit the ideas of our proud grandees. Madame de Staël had no such humbug

about her, and, besides, her knowledge of the restrictions of English society was, of necessity, limited. Talent, mind, celebrity, of any kind, were the passports to her salon: it could scarcely be expected of a foreigner, resident among us only for a season, that she should be able to seize those delicate shades of caste in which our exclusives, with true vulgarity, delight to display their silly pride. Still, she was accredited by her works to the great Mæcenases of the day, of whom Lord Lansdowne was, perhaps, the first. She passed the winter in the country houses of these noblemen at Bowood—Lord Lansdowne's, and at Middleton—Lord Jersey's.

In the spring of 1814 her enemy fell, and she rushed back triumphantly to Paris, more celebrated and far more popular than when she left it. Here she set up her brilliant throne for a space, and opened her drawing-room to those crowds of mighty men of mind who now flocked to the city which had so long been closed to them. The Restoration hailed, with eagerness, the talented daughter of the minister of the last of the Bourbons; the newspapers were delighted to have a few words from her pen; her rooms were thronged with all the representatives of political and literary liberty. Wellington and Blucher, Chateaubriand, Lafayette and young Guizot came to her as to the centre of political movement. Humboldt, Sismondi, the Schlegels, and her own friend Benjamin Constant rallied round her as the axle of the literary wheel. Canova represented art; and Madame Récamier, still radiant at six-and-thirty, beauty. Could any private court be more brilliant, with a queen of fifty, the most brilliant, almost the most celebrated of them all? Brilliant, indeed, but like most brilliancies, and many a better one than the salon of a Frenchwoman, fleeting and short-lived.

Her old enemy was not slain. The caged lion was to break the bars of his prison and burst on Europe in a fit of fury. The return of Napoleon from Elba was perhaps the finest stroke of all his policy; certainly the most comic incident in the history of the last century. He came upon his feasting foes like a shower of rain on a pic-nic party, or a policeman on a prize-fight—these similes are sadly common-place—like a ghost upon

the revellers over his coffin. Strong as they were, he routed them in a moment. They, who had gloried in their security, while the tyrant was away, fled like servants who had been drinking their master's wine in his absence, or stood cowed and trembling to receive their sentence. The turncoats had no time to turn their coats once more. He cleared his inconstant court in a few hours. The army and the people hailed him, and he spared no courtier, not even his own relations, who had taken any part in the Restoration. Perhaps Madame de Staël was the only French person then in Paris who felt that she, at least, had been true to her colours. But the re-risen man was her foe, as he had always been, and she fled like the rest, only with a better conscience.

She retired once more to Coppet, the refuge of the routed; but she did not long remain here. M. Rocca's health, which had never been good since his wounds in Spain, became worse than ever, and she determined, for her husband's sake, to seek the milder climate of Italy. The change was successful, and Rocca gained such strength that he was able to survive his wife.

In 1816 she returned to Coppet. Her persecutor was now fallen for ever, and she might have re-entered Paris in safety, but Italy and Switzerland were full of the great men of the day, and she preferred to remain in their neighbourhood. Among others, Byron, who in the mean time had married and *unmarried*, had settled not far from her. He visited her at Coppet, and found in her a good, kind friend. Her courageous spirit induced her to attack the poet boldly on the subject of his separation. He was, indeed, most wretched; and his poems—as morbid at this time as at any other, if not more so—prove what his misery in this unhappy marriage must have been. She took him to task roundly, and so prevailed with him that, on the strength of her persuasions, he wrote to England to offer a reconciliation with his wife. That wife had one of the coldest mothers in England, which is saying much. She refused the offer. Byron, with all his faults, behaved nobly in this transaction, and his conduct under embarrassed pecuniary affairs raises him in our estimation, when we find him declining

to receive the handsome remuneration offered by Murray for the 'Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina,' and afterwards distributing the money pressed upon him among authors, who, less fortunate than himself, were in a condition to need his aid. It is due to Madame de Staël to state that he wrote from Diodati in 1816: 'Madame de Staël has made Coppet as agreeable to me as kindness and pleasant society can make a place.' There is no doubt that she had an excellent heart, and that, allowing for all his faults, she saw much good in that most unhappy but most loveable man. Poor Byron, the plaything of circumstance! With less vanity and more religion he might have been the finest character of his day.

But Madame de Staël was never satisfied with the seclusion of Coppet. She yearned after the 'life' of Paris and the generous interchange of active minds. She returned to her native city only to die. For a time she kept up her active spirit, though her health was growing worse and worse. She wrote, she talked, she received. Yet time and age brought out more fully those religious feelings which had been wisely instilled in her childhood. Late in life, when talking of metaphysics, she said: 'I prefer the Lord's prayer to it all,' and we can quite believe it. Yet her affections were, of a necessity, for the world. 'I should be sorry,' she said in her last days, 'if everything were at an end between Albertine (her daughter, the Duchesse de Broglie) and me in another world.' Hard as life had been to her, though she had longed at one time to escape from it, she passed from it with regret.

In February, 1817, she was seized by a violent fever. It attacked her limbs first, and they were soon, like those of Socrates, under the effect of the poison, immovable. Still her mind, like his, remained unaltered, unimpaired. Her house was besieged by inquirers after her health, among whom Wellington came himself every day to her door to ask how she fared. The day before her death she read some of Byron's 'Manfred.' An English young lady, Miss Randall, who had been with her for some years, watched her last moments. She died in peace—and a religious peace too—on the 14th July, 1817, at the age of fifty-one. Madame de Staël will be re-

membered as the first woman of her age, if not, as Mackintosh says, of *any* age. Certainly she was the first leader of society both during and after the empire, and we are inclined to think that society owed much to her, and to be thankful that it found so respectable and so philosophic a leader.

There is nothing to say against Madame de Staël. There is no doubt of her vanity, but she had something to be vain of. There is no doubt that her interest was, after her father's death, mainly centred in herself, yet she was a very interesting as well as a very admirable woman. There is no doubt that her concealment of her second marriage was foolish. She confessed it on her death-bed to her children, and recommended to their protection the young child that had been its fruit. Her husband died soon after, still a young man.

Yet blame her as we will, for this fault or that, we must still admire her; first, as a Frenchwoman, who, though leading society, was free from all its vices; secondly, as the first authoress of her day; thirdly, as a woman of great and good heart, and one whom, were she alive, many a young man of feeling would perhaps love as well as young Rocca adored her.

There is no Queen of Society of whom we can say so much.





MRS. THRALE-PIOZZI.

Streatham and its Associations.—Who was Thrale?—The Young Dog.—Gentleman and Gentilhomme.—Little Mrs. Thrale.—Her Early Days.—Cold Splendour.—Johnson Introduced.—The Doctor's Appearance.—Johnson on Horseback.—Johnson a Sportsman.—Boswell Meets his Idol.—Vulgar Little Burney.—A 'Noble Douceur.'—Johnson on Ladies' Dress.—The Lions at Streatham.—Gordon Riots.—Mrs. Thrale and Little Burney.—Mr. Thrale's Influenza.—High Flash.—Byron's Grandfather.—Death of Thrale.—Johnson an Executor.—Sophy Streatfield.—Surlly Mr. Crutchley.—Barclay, Perkins, & Co.—The Singers drive off the Doctor.—Johnson Plays Second Fiddle.—The Scholar in his Prayers.—Mrs. Thrale's Receptions.—Samuel Johnson and Samuel Parr.—Johnson's Wedding.—Mrs. Thrale and the Larks.—The Doctor's Awkward Gallantry.—Death of Johnson.—One Foot in the Grave.—A Marriage of Attachment.—Scornful Daughters.—Mrs. Thrale's Character.—Too Tall for Anything.—One Good Trait.—Duns.—False Friends.—Family Coldness.—Life and its Troubles.



THE village of Streatham has little now of antiquity to recommend it to the mediæval tastes of the day. Its very name is vulgar Saxon instead of elegant Norman—*Strete* signifying a highway, and *ham* a dwelling; though the Normans, with little regard to its derivation, called it in Domesday Book '*Estratham*.' Lysons, unwillingly enough, consents, after fifty years had established the orthography, to spell it, *Streatham*, though the needless *e* went, good man, to his heart.

But what matters it? What matters it that, in the time of the Conqueror, certain manors were held by certain canons of Waltham? that Earl Harold had another? Earl Morton another? and that there was, doubtless, mighty quarreling amongst them all for any spare corner they could ravish from the poor? What matters it that in the parish church of St. Leonard, in the centre of Streatham, reposes the mutilated figure of an armed knight, with pointed helmet, mail-gorget, and plated cuirasses? and there, as he rests underneath a canopy orna-

mented with quatrefoils, the vulgar point to his tomb, and say, 'John of Gaunt,' whereas that doughty warrior lies entombed in St. Paul's? Near this tomb is another, far more interesting to sensible readers of modern days, although, we will grant it, less romantic. That of Henry Thrale, brewer, and of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Salusbury, recall the true legitimate associations which ought to haunt the imaginative visitant to the now commonplace locality of Streatham. Let him walk on to the small common between Tooting and the village, and view the large solid house, which was formerly called a villa, in which Thrale's memory, and that of all who belonged to him, may be said really to be entombed : and so, probably, thought his widow, when she left it to her second husband, Gabriel Piozzi, the singer, for his life.

Here the glories of Streatham are centred : Doomsday Book, Earl Harold, Earl Morton, and, with reverence be it spoken, the Canons of Waltham Abbey, are all dim, if not fairly wiped out from our mental vision, when we see, in the places of those same rapacious earls and grasping canons, the shades of Thrale and his wife, of 'little Burney' and Sir Joshua Reynolds, of David Garrick and Edmund Burke, of Oliver Goldsmith, and Arthur Murphy, and Topham Beauclerk, and hear them, in fancy, all calling each other by their Christian names ; nay, picture them to ourselves sitting round the hospitable board of the worthy Thrale, best of men and brewers, and drinking his excellent claret and still better beer. And if we could really have looked in, even after all we have named, or most of them, had gone to their rest, we might have seen their portraits, limned by the great Reynolds, hanging round, and gazing, perhaps, benignantly at those of the master and mistress of the house, at the top of the room.

But it is time to discard the pleasures of imagination, and to turn to biography.

Dr. Johnson, who, as Horace Walpole observes, 'was good-natured at bottom but ill-natured at top,' has dealt unjustly with the origin of Henry Thrale, to whose memory he devoted a page of Latin on his tombstone in the church of St. Leonard. 'Thrale,' he says, 'worked at six shillings a week for twenty

years in the great brewery which was afterwards his own.' The brewery then belonged to Edmund Halsey, whose family still flourish in Hertfordshire, and own Gaddesden Park. The concern was situated at St. Albans, and was highly profitable; it was the foundation of the provincial greatness of the Halseys. But Mr. Wilson Croker, never famous for good nature, or for making people out to be wiser or better than they are, declares that Johnson has done the parentage of Henry Thrale injustice in this account, for which he gives the authority of Blakeway. Now the clerk of St. Albans told Blakeway that Thrale's father had married a sister of Halsey's; that in other respects his family was not to be despised; and pointed out to him a handsome monument in the noble abbey, to the memory of Mr. John Thrale, merchant, who died in 1704, with the family arms and crest, on the monument; the 'crest on a ducal coronet, a tree vert.' Nevertheless, Mr. Halsey, after the fashion of old commercial men in those days, was somewhat hard-hearted, and kept his nephew at work for the six shillings weekly, without remorse, until his death. It happened, however, that Lord Cobham, the uncle of the Marquis of Buckingham, became a suitor to his daughter, and married her. The brewery, therefore, at Mr. Halsey's death, became his property in right of his wife. As a peer could not in those days continue the business, it was determined to sell it. For some time it was difficult to find a purchaser for so large a concern; it was therefore decided that Thrale should be applied to. He was an active, honest man, well versed in the ways of the house, and the brewery was therefore offered to him for the sum of thirty thousand pounds. In eleven years, having given good security, he paid the purchase-money. He accumulated a large fortune, was high sheriff of Surrey, and member for Southwark. He spent his money like a prince, or rather as most English commercial men do, for they are often princely in their ideas. His son, Henry Thrale, was sent to Oxford, and *after* he had left college, not when there—for it was not the notion of those days that men required a fortune to be spent on their education—had a thousand a year allowed him by his father, who used to say: 'If this young dog does not find so much after I

am gone as he expects, let him remember that he has had a great deal in my time.' Johnson truly said, 'An English merchant is a new species of gentleman.'

The 'young dog,' although he had associated with peers and country gentlemen at college, continued to carry on his father's business, which, he told Boswell, was so lucrative that he would not give it up even for an annuity of ten thousand a year. 'Not,' he said, 'that I get ten thousand a year for it, but it is an estate to a family.' As Henry Thrale left no son, the brewery was sold for a hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds, which was reputed to be an immense sum at the time.

Like most of our great capitalists, Henry Thrale expected, in his marriage, what is called a 'good connection.' He was united, and most happily, to Hester, the daughter of John Lynch Salusbury, a gentleman of Flintshire; her mother, the daughter of Sir Thomas Cotton, of Combermere, was also of that descent to which we now assign, with infinite stress, the word 'aristocratic.' The Salusbury pedigree, perpetually referred to by Pennant, dates, in fact, from Adam de Salzburg, son of the Duke of Bavaria, who came over to England with William the Conqueror, and obtained a house in Lancashire as the reward of his bravery, in 1070. John Salusbury, Mrs. Thrale's father, was a spendthrift, and reduced to live in a cottage in Carmarthenshire, where Mrs. Thrale relates, 'after two or three dead things,' she was born. From her liveliness of disposition she soon acquired the name of *Fiddle*: and Fiddle was the delight and plaything, not only of her own family, but of her uncle, Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton; and little Hester, fostered by all, was soon 'half a prodigy.' Nor let it be supposed that it was otherwise when Henry Thrale, brewer, led to the altar this descendant of a noble house. The notion that a merchant, or a mercantile man of any *metier*, could be a gentleman was only then creeping into society. The classes, before the Hanoverian dynasty, were as much separated as they still are on the Continent. The generous Steele had written in favour of an abolition of those invidious distinctions. The odious Boswell clamoured, in his petty way, in behalf of *their* continuance

‘Give me leave to say,’ Mr. Leland remarks, in addressing Sir John Bevil in ‘The Conscious Lovers,’ ‘that we merchants are a species of gentry that have grown into the world this last century, and are as honourable, and almost as useful as you landed folks, that have always thought yourselves so much above us; for your trading, forsooth, is extended no further than a load of hay, or a fat ox. You are pleasant people indeed! because you are generally brought up to be lazy; therefore, I warrant you, industry is dishonourable.’

So far Richard Steele—so far a liberal, courtly, kindly gentleman. Now for Boswell.

After stating the question whether a new system of gentility should be established, by which knowledge, skill, and the spirited hazards of trade should be entitled to give distinctions such as are granted to military exploits, political superiority, or mere birth, he says: ‘Such are the specious but false arguments for a proposition which will always find numerous advocates in a nation where men are every day starting up from obscurity to wealth. To refute them is needless. The general sense of mankind cries out with irresistible force, “*Un gentilhomme est toujours gentilhomme.*”’ Without pursuing the subject further, or knocking Boswell and his argument on the head, we may assert that many attributes of a gentleman were centred in Mr. Henry Thrale. He was tall, to begin with, and a good stature is no bad inheritance: his figure was well proportioned, his carriage stately. So far he must have satisfied Boswell’s idea of *un vrai gentilhomme*. He was a man of business principles, though lax in his notions of conjugal duty, an excellent scholar, of considerable literary attainments: to these characteristics he added a great knowledge of trade, sound sense, and plain independent manners, such as well become an English squire. In spite of being married to a lady of great pretensions to letters, and of unbounded loquacity, no man was more a master in his own family than Henry Thrale. ‘If he but holds up a finger,’ says his sturdy friend Johnson (who truly loved him), ‘he is obeyed.’ Wise man! for those whom he thus commanded were far happier under that despotic but kindly rule than if they had constituted a family democracy. Mrs. Thrale, on the other hand,

was short, plump, and brisk in her manners. Johnson's speech to her, when she appeared before him in a dark-coloured gown, is characteristic of this bustling, energetic little *précieuse*. We think we see her before us, as we hear the old dogmatist say, 'You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however. They are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?' (He must have forgotten all his small scraps of entomology.)

By Miss Burney, however, who, when she wrote characters, wrote them generally with discrimination, Mrs. Thrale was by no means regarded, in any way, as 'an insect.' 'She had a great deal both of good, and of not good, in common with Madame de Staël-Holstein,' she says; and she goes on to draw a comparison between the two, exalting her friend to the level of that extraordinary woman: 'Their conversation,' she declares, 'was equally luminous, from the sources of their own fertile minds, and from their splendid acquisitions from the works and acquirements of others.'

In this respect no one had a fairer chance of literary superiority than Mrs. Thrale. 'Her mother was a woman,' as Dr. Johnson, in his epitaph on Mrs. Salusbury, affirmed, although when she was alive the Doctor disliked her, 'blessed in personal appearance; of an open, cheerful temper, strong domestic affections: an accomplished linguist, fluent in speech; whose wisdom was tempered with the softer qualities of the mind; who gave to the pleasures of literature such portion of her time as she could well spare from her home duties; to her home duties as much care and attention as she devoted to letters.'

With such a husband, and such a mother, Mrs. Thrale could scarcely fail to be in some way eminent. Even Johnson, when he was angry with her, and after her second marriage, allowed that 'if she was not the wisest woman in the world she was certainly one of the wittiest.'

Many of Mrs. Thrale's early days were passed in the house of her uncle, Sir Thomas Salusbury, 'whose affection she shared with his stud.' She was not only a prodigy, but a supposed heiress; and the house was haunted by young suitors, to whom her verses were shown one day, her prowess in riding another.

Meantime her education was proceeding under the auspices of Dr. Collins, a tender friend of sixty to this merry girl of sixteen, and under his auspices she became an accomplished classical scholar. There was no drawback to the sunshine of those days, except the red-hot temper of Mr. Salusbury, her father, threatening hourly outbreaks with her good uncle, Sir Thomas.

One day the worthy baronet returned from London, having seen an incomparable personage, his beau ideal of a suitor; a man, he said, whose father had made a large fortune in trade—a model of perfection, whose merits were summed up by the one eulogium, a *first-rate sportsman*. The next day Mr. Thrale followed the baronet to Offley, Sir Thomas's seat, and his appearance and manners spoke for themselves. Still the suit could not have prospered with 'Fiddle' without a little opposition. A parson, her secret admirer, conveyed an intimation of the scheme to Hester's father, who came home in a rage, swearing that his daughter should not be 'sold for a barrel of porter.' In vain did the clear-sighted girl protest that nothing looked less like *love* than Mr. Thrale's demeanour: in vain did the father storm and threaten. The brothers quarrelled, the young lady fainted; and that same evening the father of Hester Salusbury was brought home a corpse just before the dinner-hour; and thus was this inauspicious marriage-contract prefaced. Ten months afterwards Mr. Thrale, as his wife expresses it, 'deigned to accept her undesired hand.'

From the first Hester perceived that she, a plain girl, had not one attraction in the eyes of her husband, with whom she had never been five minutes alone previous to their wedding-day. He was much kinder to her, the poor child admitted, 'than she had counted on.' Such was the commencement of a marriage in which neither party appears to have had any strong amount of affection concerned, but which Mr. Thrale's good sense and sweet temper rendered, at first, endurable, and eventually, if not happy, at all events, decorously comfortable. From a friend of Thrale's she learned what had decided him to offer to her: she, it seems, was the only woman to whom he had proffered his hand, who had *not* refused to live with him in

the Borough; and in the Borough and its business Thrale was absorbed.

A joyless, cold-hearted state of affairs ensued: confidence was no word in their vocabulary, and Thrale confided in no one. Every splendour was dashed by punctilio; the Dombey of Streatham had a pack of fox-hounds in a box at Croydon, and the young heart of poor Hester 'Fiddle' no longer bounded at the idea of a hunt: but it was 'masculine' for ladies to ride. Superb dinners weighed down the table at Streatham; poor Hester longed for something to do; but Mr. Thrale's wife was not to think of the kitchen, so she never 'knew what there was for dinner until it was on the table.'

Still, she 'wondered where his heart lay;' and found it, at length, in possession of one Humphrey Jackson, an experimentalist, who practised on poor Thrale's credulity. Events, however, ameliorated the condition of the young wife. She became useful, indeed indispensable; and people began to say how happy Mr. Thrale must be in having such a wife.

In due time Dr. Johnson taught Thrale to value, as he ought, the acquirements and energy of the lively, practical little woman. She was twenty-five years of age when Arthur Murphy, who had long been an intimate friend of her husband's, brought Samuel Johnson, in the year 1764, to Mr. Thrale's house in the Borough, where the pair then lived. Murphy had long been extolling Johnson's conversation, and wishing that the Thrales would invite him; for which, indeed, they only wanted a pretext. There was a certain shoemaker, named Woodhouse, whose poems were then the theme of general commendation; and, upon the plea of meeting him, Murphy took Johnson to Mr. Thrale's hospitable house. Mr. Woodhouse and his verses have long since descended into oblivion, yet his name lives as the immediate instrument of bringing about this celebrated friendship.

Murphy, before he introduced Johnson, warned Mrs. Thrale not to be surprised at his appearance. The hint was certainly not superfluous. Poor Johnson was no favourite of Nature's. His face is said to have been originally well formed; his contemporaries so asserted: if true, our taste in beauty must be

strangely altered. His unfortunate visage was seamed and disfigured with the scrofula—that fearful disease which as an infant, put out to nurse, he had contracted; and which good Queen Anne, in her diamonds and long black hood—unconscious, as she stretched out her round arm, on whose head her fair hand rested—had failed to cure. He was very dirty and very shabby, for which Mrs. Thrale was doubtless prepared by the following circumstance. One evening, when invited with Reynolds to the Miss Cotterell's, in Newport Street, Soho, then the centre of the fashionable world, an indiscreet servant-maid had passed an affront upon him. Seeing Johnson's beggarly-looking figure following Sir Joshua and his sister Frances into the room, she could not conceive that he was one of the company, and just as he was going up stairs, she pulled him back, and cried out, 'You fellow! what is your business here? I suppose you intend to rob the house.' Poor Johnson was thrown into such a paroxysm of shame and anger, that he roared out like a bull, and cried, 'What have I done? What have I done?' Nor could he recover the whole evening from this affront.

Mrs. Thrale might well, therefore, expect to see a man of revolting appearance; and certainly she was not disappointed. If the original form of his face had been good, it was now utterly distorted; one eye was nearly sightless from disease; a scratch wig hid the best part of his face—his forehead; he had an almost convulsive movement either of his hands, lips, feet, or knees, and sometimes of all together; a most uncomfortable neighbour either at one's side at dinner, or perhaps still worse, if opposite.

To the kind and intellectual inmates of Thrale's house these defects were, however, only a source of pity. Dr. Johnson made himself so agreeable, and found his host and hostess so charming, that he dined with them every Thursday that winter, until he was so ill that he could not stir out of the room in Bolt Court, which he occupied, for months.

Such was the commencement of an intimacy which is said, by its genial effect upon the learned and blameless hypochondriac, to have saved him from insanity. He was respected, listened to, flattered, when he laid down the law at table; when

he spoke of his malady, of his visionary fears and religious despondency in private, he was soothed by the kind Thrale, and cheered by the spirits of the 'insect.' Often must he, we may be assured, have trespassed on the patience of his hosts without perceiving that he did so. Johnson had persecuted Richardson with his visits till he had persisted in making the novelist first endure, and then like him. He had persevered in his evening calls on Reynolds till he had almost made the great painter dislike him. He stayed very late. One evening Sir Joshua, having been harassed by professional business, saw him enter with dismay. He immediately took up his hat, and went out of the house. But the hint was quite useless; Johnson still went on calling: the words *de trop* were not in his Dictionary, and he would have pooh-pooh'd any remark that had implied his company at any time not being wanted. This was not from self-esteem, but from the total absence of *tact*.

When Mr. Thrale removed to Streatham, they persuaded Johnson to leave Bolt Court, and to live with them almost wholly at Streatham; 'where,' said Mrs. Thrale, 'I undertook the care of his health, and had the honour and happiness of contributing to its restoration.'

Nothing ought to be more satisfactory to the rich than the power they have of giving ease, cheerfulness, and even the sources of health to the *educated* poor. The great, the excellent, but the disagreeable Johnson owed to Goldsmith that he owed his recovery to Mrs. Thrale's attentions.

He delighted in carriage exercise: at Streatham there was a coach at his service. When Mrs. Piozzi asked him why he doted on a coach so, he answered that, 'in the first place, the company were shut in with him there, and could not escape as out of a room; and in the next place, he heard all that was said in a carriage.' Riding, on the contrary, seemed to give him little pleasure. It neither raised his spirits, nor did he otherwise derive that benefit from it that it generally confers. He was heard to relate how he had once fallen asleep on horseback when performing a journey in that manner. Yet notwithstanding this distaste, he was occasionally persuaded to hunt by his friend Mr. Thrale, and would then display no want

of courage, leaping and even breaking through hedges, and this, as he himself stated, from no excess of eagerness in the chase, but merely to avoid the trouble of mounting and dismounting. Boswell's statement that he *once hunted*, would lead us to infer that it was more an occasional than an habitual practice ; and on this subject he has himself said, ' I have now learned, by hunting, to perceive that it is no diversion at all, nor ever takes a man out of himself for a moment : the dogs have less sagacity than I could have prevailed on myself to suppose ; and the gentlemen often called out to me not to ride over them. It is very strange and very melancholy that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them.' And yet he was said to have been proud of being called a sportsman ; and Mrs. Piozzi declares he was never so much gratified by praise, as when once, upon the Brighton downs, Mr. Hamilton exclaimed, ' Why, Johnson rides as well, for aught I see, as the most illiterate fellow.' He would ride Mr. Thrale's old hunter very presentably, and would follow the hounds for fifty miles, and end, at times, without allowing that he was either amused or fatigued.

What a change must all this have been to a man whose relaxation had been a tavern ; whose home was either a den in the Temple or a dungeon in Bolt Court ; who was in the habit of staying out till two every morning, and coming down the next day, unbrushed, perhaps unwashed, sometimes unfed, and always sick at heart and ill at ease.

Henceforth we must picture to ourselves the party at Streatham, which had hitherto been always remarkable for eminent and literary persons—now invariably marked by one object—that of the great Samuel in scratch wig and black single-breasted coat ; both, however, considerably renovated and brushed up by the care of his kind hostess.

Boswell is near him ; a young man under thirty, with a comic-serious, hideous face, and with an imperturbable good-humour, which may by the stern be thought sycophantic. Johnson had known him two years when he became acquainted with the Thrales. They met in the back parlour of Davies, the bookseller's shop in Great Russell Street, where Boswell, '*low-*

jours gentilhomme,' according to his own account, had condescended to drink tea. Boswell saw Johnson through a glass door communicating with the shop, and had time to whisper to Davies, 'Don't tell where I come from,' recollecting the doctor's hatred of the Scotch. 'Mr. Boswell from Scotland,' cried the bookseller and actor, archly. Let Boswell tell the rest himself, for no one but himself can do his own meanness justice.

"Mr. Johnson," said I, "I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it." I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as any humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky, for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression "come from Scotland," which I used in the sense of being of that country; and as it I had said that I had come away from it or left it, retorted, "That, sir, I find, is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help." This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we sat down I felt myself not a little embarrassed and apprehensive of what might come next.'

Having thus forsworn his country, the young Scot soon found his way to No. 1, Inner Temple Lane, where Johnson then lived in chambers; and thus began that acquaintance to which the world owes the most *telling* piece of biography ever given to an English public.

Let us, then, behold Johnson, in his old rusty black coat, with his little shrivelled unpowdered wig, too small for his head; his shirt-neck loose, his knee-bands loose, his black worsted stockings 'ill drawn up,' his feet in unbuckled shoes, instead of slippers; let us see him thus, as all the fine company that drive down from London to Streatham come in and out, or stay to dinner. Boswell was then, be it remarked, a man about town, whose father had wanted to buy him a commission in the Guards, but who now preferred following Johnson as a household dog follows his master, and picks up the crumbs which he drops.

Near, often, to Johnson, his trumpet to his ear, sits Reynolds,

whose mild countenance and gentle manners are strongly contrasted with Johnson's pugnacious demeanour, and convulsive movements ; Oliver Goldsmith, recommended to Johnson from his being 'poor and honest,' in a laced coat and darned stockings, endeavouring to shine, but put down, though leniently, by Johnson ; Bennet Langton and Topham Beauclerk, the fine gentlemen of the party, form the group whose shades haunt the now antiquated house, which once rang with their repartees, or resounded to their solemn arguments.

But about ten years after Johnson had been almost domesticated at Streatham, another 'insect,' in the shape of Fanny Burney, came to vary the scene. She was at this time twenty-six years of age ; and as the authoress of 'Evelina,' was 'taken' to Mrs. Thrale's, which was a sort of show-fair for such specimens as 'little Burney,' sensitive and simple, though somewhat fond of great people, and worldly withal ; who had been in a state of apprehension when first her acquaintance with Mrs. Thrale began lest that lady should infer, from her describing vulgar characters in 'Evelina,' that she had been accustomed to associate with them. 'But if you do tell Mrs. Thrale,' she wrote to her father, alluding to the secret of her own authorship, 'won't she think it strange where I can have kept company to describe such a family as the Branghtons, Mr. Brown, and some others?' With this fear of being accused of an *innate vulgarity*, she had first entered into Mrs. Thrale's presence. But no sooner did she know her than Mrs. Thrale was the 'goddess of her idolatry,' whose praise could not be too highly valued. Johnson, too, had read *the* book, the only book at that time in little Burney's thoughts, and had said there were passages in it that were worthy of Richardson. 'My dear, dear Doctor Johnson, what a charming man you are !' writes the young authoress ; and away through dusty roads she sets off to Streatham, where Mrs. Thrale's house then stood pleasantly in a paddock. Mrs. Thrale was strolling about, and as the chaise stopped, heard the voice of Dr. Burney, whom she knew. 'And you have brought your daughter ; now you *are* good ;' and with these words, and extending both her hands, the hostess of Streatham led 'Evelina' into the house, talking

for some time to her father in order to give Fanny an opportunity of recovering her composure.

Mrs. Thrale, with great delicacy, never alluded to 'the book,' nor was it named, until Mr. Seward, coming in, ran 'on to speak of the work with which she had lately *favoured the world.*'

Dinner came in due time; a dinner, the profusion of which was in those times its merit. Sir Joshua Reynolds, speaking of the dessert, thought it a compliment to say that if all the company were helped out of one dish there would be enough for all. How the Thrales would have despised the thimblefuls of sweetmeats which are ranged on our modern plateaux in the form of dessert! That day the dinner, little Fanny thought, was 'noble:' the dessert 'most elegant.' Dr. Johnson, who did not come till this 'noble dinner' was on the table, took his place. 'Sitting by Miss Burney,' he vouchsafed to say, 'make him very proud.' Mr. Thrale, the shrewd young *bleue*, observed, did not seem 'a happy man; but I think,' she added, 'I have seldom seen a rich man with a light heart and light spirits.'

Thus began the holiday of Fanny Burney's life—that period which she passed at Streatham. Mrs. Thrale was all gaiety and drollery, and amused her with descriptions of the *natives* of Streatham. Dinner was sumptuous: tea was social. Even a supper concluded the day of heavy eating, when Johnson would in jest challenge Thrale to get drunk. Breakfast was occupied in joking 'Evelina' about her 'Holborn beau,' when Johnson declared that even Harry Fielding never drew so good a character as the 'fine gentleman *manqué*;' Fanny in all the 'delicate confusion' of which she writes so incessantly, being as happy as a queen in spite of her blushes.

In all these scenes Mrs. Thrale appeared to the utmost advantage—hospitable, well-bred, and, with what is an attribute of good breeding, a forgetfulness of self quite surprising in a pretty, flattered, talented woman.

Sometimes the company was astounded by a profound silence, when anything had offended him, on the part of Johnson. Sometimes he undertook to lecture the ladies on their dress—

the last subject, one would suppose, on which he had any right to give advice. Poor Mrs. Burney had been 'bothered out of her life' about going to church in a linen jacket that had offended the doctor; she had succumbed and changed it; nevertheless, nothing pleased him. He then had found fault with her wearing a black hat and cloak in summer; next time she went to Streatham, Mrs. Burney meekly told him she had got her old white cloak scoured to please him. 'Scoured!' says he, 'have you, madam?' (thus writes Fanny); 'so he see-sawed,' his usual way when irritated, 'for he could not for shame find fault, but he did not seem to like the scouring.' Poor Fanny, therefore, was even more rejoiced that he approved of her dress than that he praised her novel; 'for if he disliked,' she with much *naïveté* said, 'alackaday, how *could* I change?' Such were those Streatham days, mixed clouds and sunshine, except when Sir Joshua Reynolds came, and then all was sunshine. His amiable temper shed an influence on all; besides, he had said he would give fifty pounds (the price of one of his portraits to his best sitters) to see the authoress of 'Evelina,' and there she sat, close by the doctor, and opposite to him at dinner.

Then came Mrs. Montagu, who was not in favour at Streatham—too brilliant for Dr. Johnson, too much of a *grande dame* still for Mrs. Thrale, and too patronising for Miss Burney; yet she talked away, and kept up the energies of the party, who worshipped her in a sort of terror. Then Dr. Harrington, the descendant of Queen Elizabeth's godson, and the father of the Rev. Henry Harrington, who wrote the 'Nugæ Antiquæ,' looked in, and joining in the talk about Chatterton, surprised Miss Burney by saying that he thought that ill-starred poet was an impostor.' Next appears 'Pliny Melmonth,' as he was called, who proved less agreeable; he chose to 'play first violin' without ceremony, 'and had a proud conceit in look and manner mighty forbidding.' Bishop Porteus and his agreeable wife, Dr. Porteus himself gay, high-spirited, manly, quick, and penetrating—quite a different person to what one supposes—and, in singular contrast, Anstey, who wrote the 'New Bath Guide,' and could never forget that he had done so—formed, time after

time, salient objects in the Thrlean evenings. Lord Mulgrave, too, 'was delightful;' and all the inferior parts in this pleasant comedy were filled up by a small company of amiable Miss Leighs, charming Miss Lewises, flattering Augusta Byron, and the expletive Miss Ansteys. Then a season at Bath, and balls, and concerts in the pump-room were as agreeable, probably, to Mrs. Thrale as they were intoxicating to Fanny, who went with her friend to winter at that then crowded watering-place. Bath Easton, then occupied by a Lady Miller, was one of the most 'tonish' houses, as Fanny Burney expresses it, of the place. The eldest Miss Thrale, a handsome girl, was now introduced by Mrs. Thrale at this house, where no one except persons of rank or fame were admitted, and whence all whose reputations were not wholly unblemished, were excluded. Mr. and Mrs. Anstey—she a thin, Quaker-looking woman, he 'silly important and silently proud;' in fact, like most humorous writers, very dull in society—were the pet aversions of little Fanny, and probably, of Mrs. Thrale, both of whom generally measured every one at that time by the same standard. But 'Evelina's' heart trembled at the sound of those two magic words, 'my lord;' a phrase regarding which lady novelists are peculiarly susceptible. So her heart bounded when the agreeable Lord Mulgrave stood near her, or when she was driven up by the crowded assembly close to Lord Althorpe, afterwards Earl Spencer, leaning against a folding door. But compliments from *Beau Travell*, who gave the *ton* to all the world, and set up young ladies in the *beau monde*; attentions from Mr. Tyson, the popular master of the ceremonies; sermons from the Bishop of Peterborough, who insisted on their forming a party with him to Spring Gardens, and giving them tea there; grave interviews with Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Harriet Bowdler, were at once both pleasant and edifying: the attentions of Captain Boucher, the praise of Beau Travell, and all other pleasures were, however, suddenly interrupted by the Gordon Riots, which broke up the delightful cliques of Bath Easton and the Belvidere, and drove Mrs. Thrale and her *protégé* and daughters from a city which was so disturbed by the fanatic acts of bigots.

Even Streatham was divested of all furniture, from fear of conflagration ; and Mrs. Thrale, in great agitation, decided to travel about the country. A large party of fashionables had walked from the parades that very day, to see the Roman Catholic chapel consuming : all was then quiet ; but it was like the quiet after a thunderstorm.

Some malignant foe having stated in the papers that Mr. Thrale was a Papist, his property, and it was feared his person, were marked out for destruction by the ' pious mob.' It was, Miss Burney believed, ' a Hothamite ' report, to inflame Mr. Thrale's constituents against him.

For a time the greatest peril attended Mrs. Thrale's steps in *any* direction. In June, 1780, she and her friend fled from Bath, leaving it full of dragoons, and well protected by a band of chairmen, powerful beings, who were sworn in as constables, and armed with bludgeons. Mrs. Thrale and her dear Fanny now separated, and the former, with her daughters Susan and Sophy, joined her husband at Brighton. The mutual epistles of the friends at this time were full of tenderness.

' Ah ! my sweet girl,' writes Mrs. Thrale, ' all this stuff written, and not one word of the loss I feel in your leaving me ! But, upon my honour, I forbear only to save you fretting ; for I do think you would vex if you saw how sadly I looked about for you ever since I came home.'

' Nobody does write such sweet letters,' Fanny wrote in reply, ' as my dear Mrs. Thrale ; and I would rather give up my month's allowance of meat than my week's allowance of an epistle.'

Fanny Burney was now at home in St. Martin's Lane. The house once belonged to Sir Isaac Newton, and the Burneys thence received from their Streatham friends the name of ' Newtonians.' Whilst Fanny Burney was drinking tea with Dr. Johnson, and ' only one brass-headed cane gentleman,' in Bolt Court, Mrs. Thrale was still gaining health with her ' Susy and Sophy at Brighton, where the girls bathed and grew, and rioted her out of her senses.'

Soon after this we find Fanny Burney's journal resumed at Streatham. But trial was then impending over that favoured

spot. Fanny was ill : was tenderly nursed by Mrs. Thrale, kind to all ; but fears were excited for the kind, the generous Henry Thrale, whose state, she plainly saw, augured proximate danger.

‘Your letters, my love,’ she wrote at this time to her sister, ‘have been more than usually welcome to me of late ; their contents have been very entertaining and satisfactory, and their arrival has been particularly seasonable ; not on account of my illness—that alone never yet lowered my spirits as they are now lowered, because I know I must ere long, in all probability, be again well ; but oh, Susy ! I am—I have been—and I fear must always be, alarmed indeed for Mr. Thrale ; and the more I see and know him, the more alarmed, because the more I love and dread to lose him.’

They had then just been passing a few happy days at Brighton, where the charming Lady Hesketh, the friend of Cowper, had become, as Miss Burney said, ‘quite enchanted with Mrs. Thrale ;’ whilst she had made Fanny talk with her very copiously, by looking at her, and remarking that nothing was so formidable as to be in company with silent observers ; on which Fanny gathered courage, and entered the lists with her ladyship. After this, followed in Evelina’s ‘Diary’ a list of visits, compliments, and characters, cleverly though slightly dashed off by the young and happy authoress.

‘And now, my dear Susy,’ she at last begins, ‘to tragedy, for all I have yet writ is farce to what I must now add.’ Mr. Thrale had been ill with the influenza, or what was so termed. He was returning to Streatham, when a violent shivering fit came on. Two servants were sent on to order dinner and good fires to be prepared at Reigate, unhappily with no success. The town was full of militia, and the poor fever-stricken man was shown into a comfortless room ; one of those large, cheerless, frigid apartments that are still to be met with in old-fashioned country towns, if not much frequented except for electioneering committees or county assemblies. The opulent Henry Thrale, who could command thousands, could not now insure the commonest and perhaps the best comfort of ordinary life—a good fire. The circulation of his frame, frozen by the cold, did not

return, and consciousness was suspended. He tried to articulate, but in vain.

'Poor Mrs. Thrale,' wrote Fanny Burney, 'worked like a servant. She lighted the fire with her own hands; took the bellows, and made such a one as might have roasted an ox in ten minutes. * * * After dinner Mr. Thrale grew better, and for the rest of our journey was sleepy, and mostly silent.'

They reached Streatham, nevertheless, that night, and the next day Dr. Heberden and Mr. Seward came; and in a few days the invalid became so much better that Dr. Johnson was also admitted; and Fanny Burney and Miss Thrale, who were learning Latin under his solemn auspices, resumed their lessons, and gained much praise from the awful pedagogue for their aptitude.

It must have been touching, on this occasion, to have seen Dr. Johnson's attention to his friend Thrale, whom he never left when he was ill and in low spirits; but, trying to cheer him, nursed him like a brother.

Arthur Murphy arrived soon afterwards, and was in 'high flash:' took Fanny's reluctant hand, and kissed it; and then entered into a 'mighty gay conversation,' and put them all into spirits. Even Mr. Thrale was well enough then to adjourn with the rest of the party to little Burney's dressing-room, as she was not exactly ill, but *en petite santé* that evening.

For some time all went on smoothly. Mr. Thrale began again 'to dine below, play at cards, and make,' as Mrs. Thrale wrote to her Fanny, when she had returned to St. Martin's Lane, 'as much haste to be well as mortal man can do.' The accounts of 'my master,' as Mrs. Thrale playfully called her husband, continued to improve, and Streatham was as cheerful as ever. Dr. Burney has been *ordered* by Mr. Thrale to sit to Reynolds for his picture: so these two favourites were secured for the day. 'Merlin,' Mrs. Thrale wrote word, had been here to tune the piano, and had told her friend Mrs. Davenant and her that he had invented a particular mill to grind old ladies young, as he was so particularly fond of their company. 'I suppose,' she adds, 'he thought we should bring *grist*. Was that the way to keep people in *tune*, I asked him?'

For a while Streatham preserved its charming aspect of hospitality and social superiority. Mrs. Thrale, fascinating, still young and flattered, was received, in virtue of her own birth, it may be presumed, at court; and had a court dress woven from a pattern of Owyhee manufacture, brought by Captain Burney, Fanny's brother, from the island. It was trimmed with gold 'to the tune of sixty-five pounds,' and was the source of much talk. Then her engagements, she still wrote, were complicated between business and '*flash*' (a slang word long sent down to the lower classes). Then she had a *conversazione*, at which Mrs. Montagu glistened with diamonds; 'Sophy' (her daughter) 'smiled; Johnson was good-humoured; Lord John Clinton attentive; Dr. Bowdler tame; my master not asleep;' and at which, she carelessly adds, '*Piozzi sang*.' 'Then,' she gaily remarks, 'Mrs. Byron rejoices that her admiral and I agree so well. The way to win his heart is connoisseurship, it seems; and for a back ground and contour, who comes up to Mrs. Thrale, you know?'

Admiral Byron, to whom this allusion was made, was that gallant ancestor whose name and exploits were honoured by his grandson, Lord Byron. His well-known history gave him all the attributes that Lord Byron most cherished—romantic deeds. Whilst only a midshipman on board Lord Anson's ship, the 'Wager,' which was in a circumnavigating squadron, young Byron was cast away on a desolate island in the South Seas. There he endured, with all the elasticity of a young and gallant man, five years of extreme hardship. He returned to England to rise to the highest ranks of his profession, and to figure in a *conversazione* at Streatham. His wife, one of the Cornish Trevannions, was an intimate friend of Mrs. Thrale's; whilst his daughter Augusta, who married Colonel Leigh, was one of the beauties of the time. The admiral's only son, John, was the father of Lord Byron. In him the noble characteristics of the race seemed to be suspended; and his marriage with Catherine Gordon (notwithstanding her descent from James II. of Scotland) was a real calamity to the honourable and gifted family of Byron.

'This was the last *conversazione* at Streatham during Mr.

Thrle's life. Fanny Burney was now almost ill from vexation, for Mr. Thrle, whose mind seems to have suffered from his malady, suddenly resolved to go to Spa, thence to Italy, and thence wherever his fancy led him. Mrs. Thrle and Dr. Johnson were to accompany him. This plan was, however, disapproved of both by Sir Richard Jebb, then the fashionable physician, and by Dr. Pepys; and it was settled that a body of friends should encircle Mr. Thrle, and entreat him to relinquish so arduous a journey. But the counsel was needless.

Early in the morning of the 4th of April, 1781, Mr. Thrle, who had appeared for some time very lethargic, expired. Dr. Johnson was by him when he expired, and thus, in his 'Prayers and Meditations,' refers to the event: 'I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned on me but with respect and benignity.' It was much to say of any friend in this inconsistent world; *much*, very much to say of a rich man towards a poor though not dependent friend.

Johnson was made one of Thrle's executors; but the Literary Club, which met on the evening of the good brewer's death, were disappointed in their hopes that he had rendered the hardworking Johnson independent of his own exertions. He left him, in common with his other three executors, two hundred pounds. Johnson was then, be it remembered, in the enjoyment of a pension of three hundred a year; and it is observable that those persons who have most to spend themselves are always of opinion that their indigent friends can live upon little. It was very diverting to see Johnson, now for the first time in his life, acting in a capacity which, from his having had but little concern in the real business of life, appeared to him one of vast consequence. He gave up his time and thoughts zealously to the matter. It was Johnson still—still the pedagogue, when, with an air of importance, he appeared bustling about as an executor with his pen and ink-horn in his buttonhole, like an exciseman; and when, eventually, the brewery was sold, on being asked what he considered to be the real value of the property, he answered in true Johnsonian style: 'We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats,

but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.'

Mr. Thrale's death was thus alluded to by his widow in writing to Miss Burney, to whom she penned these few but telling words:—'Write to me—pray for me.' That hurried note was thus endorsed in Fanny Burney's 'Diary'—'Written a few hours after the death of Mr. Thrale, which happened by a sudden stroke of apoplexy on the morning of a day on which half the fashion of London had been invited to an intended assembly at their house in Grosvenor Square.'

That memorandum relates the sad fact: the bereavement appears to have crushed Mrs. Thrale, who was stricken down as if never to recover; but she *did* recover, to marry, if not unworthily, unwisely, a second time. 'You bid me pray for you,' wrote Fanny Burney, 'and so indeed I do, for the restoration of your sweet peace of mind. I pray for your resignation to this hard blow; for the continued union and exertion of your virtues with your talents; and for the happiest reward their exertion can meet with, in the gratitude and prosperity of your children. These are my prayers for my beloved Mrs. Thrale.' Further on she adds: 'Nothing but kindness did I ever meet with from Mr. Thrale: he ever loved to have me, not merely with his family, but with himself; and gratefully shall I ever remember a thousand kind expressions of esteem and good opinion which are now crowding upon my memory.'

As a friend, no doubt, Mr. Thrale was truly to be both missed and mourned. As a husband, one can scarcely wonder at the want of all affection on the part of a wife of whom he cannot be said to have been worthy. Much blame has been attached to Mrs. Thrale for her second marriage. That act is now extenuated by the recent publication of her autobiography.

It was through the medium of her old preceptor, Dr. Collins, that Mrs. Thrale became acquainted with that beautiful S. G. Sophy Streatfield. She was also a pupil of Collins, and the same half intellectual, half tender friendship that had existed between Hester Salusbury and the Doctor was carried on between him and S. G. She soon made almost constantly a part of the family at Streatham, and soon, Mrs. Thrale fancied, endea-

voured to supplant her in the good opinion of her husband, who took, in the lovely innmate's society, 'an unusual, and unrepressed delight.' That a 'sentimental attachment subsisted between Sophy, and "my Master"—as Thrale was styled—was obvious to every one, and to Miss Thrale, among the rest: even Dr. Johnson exclaimed, "Why, Mr. Thrale is peregrinus Domi, I hear! He lives in Clifford Street all winter." "And so he did," adds Mrs. Thrale—"leaving his carriage at his sister's door in Hanover Square, that no inquiries might hurt his favourite's reputation."'

This conduct is equally discreditable to the learned, the fascinating, and the gentle Sophy, and to the reserved, imperious Thrale. Poor Mrs. Thrale bore it in silence: but if there was, in her case, no affection to be wounded, there was pride: there was the sense of what is due to a wife; and there she felt sensibly. Independent of Mr. Thrale's sentiments of other ladies, he was, it appears, an epicure to the greatest extent. When told by his physicians of his danger, his sole reply was an inquiry as to when the lamprey season began; and a request that the first fish of the kind that the Severn produced should be sent to him. No one, indeed, could control his appetite; no one prevent him, weak as he was in person, from going out night after night.

Mrs. Thrale after this misfortune fled to Brighton, to be consoled by her aged friend Mr. Scrase, her 'Daddy Crisp,' and rejected, until her return to Streatham, even the society of Fanny Burney. It was at first decided by Mr. Thrale's four executors that this gay 'Queen of Society,' Mrs. Thrale, was to carry on the business with their aid, Dr. Johnson being one of the quartette; and the rich widow, as it might be expected, was 'sadly worried,' and in 'continual fevers,' about her affairs, which were greatly complicated, so that sometimes, after her visits to the Borough, Mrs. Thrale alarmed her friends by fainting away. Streatham, nevertheless, was crowded by titled and episcopal condolers: and, in the course of May the widow's spirits seemed to be tolerably recovered, if one may judge from the following anecdote from Evelina's 'Diary.' Mr. Crutchley, be it observed, was one of the four executors, and

a man whom little Burney, from hating had begun to like. He was young, and probably rich. But perhaps he read her thoughts, and checked her opening designs, and set at rest the raillery of Mrs. Thrale, by an act of impertinence which no one can so well relate as its victim.

“Sunday morning nobody went to church but Mr. Crutchley, Miss Thrale, and myself; and some time after, when I was sauntering upon the lawn before the house, Mr. Crutchley joined me. We were returning together to the house, when Mrs. Thrale, popping her head out of her dressing-room window, called out, “How nicely these men domesticate among us, Miss Burney! Why, they take to us as natural as life!”

“Well, well,” cried Mr. Crutchley, “I have sent for my horse, and I shall release you early to-morrow morning. I think yonder comes Sir Philip.”

“Oh! you’ll have enough to do with *him*,” cried she, laughing; “he is well prepared to plague you, I assure you.”

“Is he?—and what about?”

“Why, about Miss Burney. He asked me the other day, what was my present establishment. ‘Mr. Crutchley and Miss Burney,’ I answered. ‘How well those two names go together,’ cried he; ‘I think they can’t do better than make a match of it. I will consent, I am sure!’ he added; ‘and to-day, I dare say, you will hear enough of it.’”

‘I leave you to judge if I was pleased at this stuff thus communicated.

“I am very much obliged to him indeed!” cried I, drily; and Mr. Crutchley called out—

“*Thank him! thank him!*” in a voice of pride and of pique that spoke him mortally angry.

‘I instantly went into the house, leaving him to talk it out with Mrs. Thrale, to whom I heard him add, “So this is Sir Philip’s kindness!” and her answer, “I wish you no worse luck.”’

Nevertheless Fanny’s heart still clung to surly Mr. Crutchley, who was, in her opinion, ‘generous, amiable, and delicate;’ but who does not appear to have ‘come forward,’ nor, to our notions, to have justified her encomiums by his conduct.

We now find the dining-room at Streatham thronged with Irish ladies, whom Mrs. Thrale was obliged to put up with on 'account of connection;' and the names of Perkins and of Barclay begin to succeed those of Byron and Mulgrave, Clinton and Montague, in Fanny's now sobered 'Diary.' We are not, therefore, surprised that the brewery was to be sold, Mr. Barclay, the quaker, being the bidder. On the eventful day when the sale was to be agreed upon, Mrs. Thrale went to the Borough to meet the executors. It was an agitating occasion to all at Streatham, and the wealthy widow was much excited as she got into her coach, telling Miss Burney that if all went well, she would, on her return, wave a white handkerchief out of the coach window.

Four o'clock came, dinner was ready, and no Mrs. Thrale. Five o'clock came: no Mrs. Thrale. So Fanny went out on the lawn, where she loitered in eager expectation till near six, when a coach appeared, and a white pocket handkerchief was waved from it.

Fanny ran to the door to meet her friend. Mutual embraces and kind expressions followed, and then dinner was ordered. The *difficile* Mr. Crutchley and Dr. Johnson—now deaf, but softened by his friend Thrale's death into being always amiable—were the sole guests.

From the moment of his friend's death, Dr. Johnson's intimacy with his family declined. Mrs. Thrale still professed to esteem him; nay, even more: she had once said to Boswell—'There are many who admire and *respect* Mr. Johnson, but you and I *love* him.' But, the noble-hearted old man now found that he was to give place to a very different order of persons to any before whom he had ever quailed. He could have met the learned on their own grounds: he would have defied the fashionable; but deaf, solemn, and grieved Johnson was pushed out of Streatham by singers and music-masters. Sacchini, about whom every one raved, was, even in July, singing before a party at Streatham, with Piozzi 'the music-master.' Piozzi, on that occasion, 'sang his very best:' and no doubt with a zeal that was amply repaid by the rich widow's hand. Mr. Thrale left no son: his three daughters were almost grown

up. 'Queney,' as the eldest was called, in reference to her name being Esther, was a fine girl, now introduced everywhere; but there was too great a degree of infatuation in Mrs. Thrale's dawning passion for Piozzi, for her to perceive what a cruel injustice she did her daughters in giving them, as it soon appeared she intended to do, so unsuitable a stepfather. Poor Johnson had once written to a friend: 'You and I should now naturally cling to one another. We have outlived most of those who could pretend to rival us in each other's kindness. In our walk through life we have dropped our companions, and are now to pick up such as chance may offer us, or to travel on alone.' He soon found that, as far as Mrs. Thrale was concerned, he was to 'travel on alone.' Various reasons for the alienation that took place between them have been alleged: by some, that Johnson was jealous of Mrs. Thrale's affections; by others, that he was mortified by the loss of his accustomed enjoyments at Streatham—so long open to him during Mr. Thrale's life. It was, however, no selfish or absurd reason that made Johnson bitter when he beheld the place of his friend supplied by an Italian singer. It was wounded affection acting upon a noble, guileless nature, that could not adopt prudence when it implied the sacrifice of sincerity. Well, indeed, might he grieve: well might Dr. Beattie have thought Mrs. Thrale 'incapable of acting so unwise a part as she afterwards did:' for appearances were against her: the real state of affairs between her and Mr. Thrale had never then been disclosed by her: and it remained for subsequent revelations to palliate that which was then universally condemned.

The first time that Boswell saw Mrs. Thrale after her husband's death, all seemed as usual, and she even said she was glad that Mr. Boswell was come, as she was going to Bath, and did not like to leave Dr. Johnson before he came, and her manner was kind and attentive. Johnson appeared depressed and silent, but was as brilliant after his after-dinner's nap as ever.

'“Talking of conversation,” he said, “there must, in the first place, be knowledge, there must be materials; in the second place, there must be a command of words; in the third place,

there must be imagination, to place things in such views as they are not commonly seen in ; and in the fourth place. there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that is not to be overcome by failures : this last is an essential requisite ; for want of it many people do not excel in conversation. Now I want it ; I throw up the game upon losing a trick." I wondered to hear him talk thus of himself, and said : " I don't know, sir, how this may be, but I am sure you beat other people's cards out of their hands." I doubt whether he heard this remark. While he went on talking triumphantly, I was fixed in admiration, and said to Mrs. Thrale, " Oh for short-hand to take this down !" " You'll carry it all in your head," said she ; " a long head is as good as short-hand."

He continued, his biographer states, his friendship for Mrs. Thrale and her family as long as it was acceptable. What a touching letter he wrote to her after his first stroke of palsy in 1783, when he was seventy-four years of age !

'On Monday, the 16th, I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has long been my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God, that, however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good ; I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

'Soon after I perceived I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it. In order to rouse the vocal organs, I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think reheated it, but all in vain. I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I

think, slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, he left my hand. I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend, Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted.

‘I have so far recovered my vocal powers as to repeat the Lord’s Prayer, with no very imperfect articulation.’

Yet he once said of Mrs. Thrale, when alone with Boswell, ‘Sir, she has done everything wrong since Thrale’s bridle was off her neck ;’ and in this opinion he was supported by the common censure of all who knew her. To her choice of intimate acquaintance, Johnson might now have applied the remark which he made in the house of the gentleman who had not been particular in his associates—

‘Rags, sir, will always make their appearance where they have a right to do it.’

It was not, however, long before Mrs. Thrale returned to her house in London, where again she received the *beau monde*. Miss Burney, a second time successful in her ‘Cecilia,’ over which Mrs. Thrale, according to her own account, shed tears and stopped to kiss the book at times, in her enthusiasm, was again the centre of attraction. Here, in addition to the usual half-literary, half-fashionable set, were ‘Cottons and Swinner-ton,’ beaux who never ‘ceased laughing’ at the loud salute given by Dr. Johnson to little Burney on her arrival in the room. Amongst all the gaieties which ensued, the name of Paccher-rotti, the singer, appears frequently ; but that of Piozzi, whether from accident or design, is completely dropped. Great names, in their line, however, were called out before Mrs. Thrale’s door. Sir Ashton Lever, Nollekens, Reynolds, Burke, Erskine, Selwyn, are resounded in mingled chorus with those of Johnson and of Samuel Parr. Parr was introduced by Mr. Twining, and was asked to dinner to meet Johnson, who was his model in manners and style. The renowned rector of Hatton was then at Norwich. The encounter must have been interesting : but Miss Burney was far too much taken up with herself, and the compliments to her ‘Cecilia,’ to give any sustained account of the conversation of these two notable doctors. Johnson

was, however, extremely pleased with Dr. Parr's conversational powers, which consisted, as those who remember him can certify, not in the battledore-and-shuttlecock rebound, not in the give-and-take style, but in an impressive conversational eloquence that burst forth when any especial theme called out his admiration or excited his wrath. Dr. Parr, in his benevolent mood, was a glorious creature; his praise was discriminating, though highly coloured; his language perfect; his manner most dramatic. When indignant, the eloquence of those lisping accents was something marvellous; but it was often, indeed almost always, vitiated by coarseness.

When Dr. Parr left, Johnson thus expressed himself:—‘Sir, I am obliged to you for having asked me this evening. Parr is a fair man: I do not know when I have had an occasion of such free controversy. It is remarkable how much of a man's life may pass without meeting with any instance of the kind of open discussion.’ Parr was, be it remembered, a stern Whig, the pet of the Foxites; Johnson as stern a Tory and Jacobite as ever wielded a pen. After he died, and one of his foes was ‘snarling at his fame,’ Dr. Parr, with great animation, exclaimed, ‘Ay, now the old lion is dead, every ass thinks he may kick at him.’

In the simplicity of their ideas, and in their love for good homely old English fashions, these two great scholars agreed wonderfully. Dr. Parr revived at Hatton the fashion of keeping May-day, against which the Puritans had preached, and which the finery of modern England had exploded, lest grandeur should mix with plebeianism. He used to crown the prettiest villager amongst the farmers' daughters at Hatton with a wreath of May flowers: for a day before, he had employed his young lady friends to decorate a tall May-pole, over which swung garlands of cowslips and blue-bells, mixed with ribbons. Around it danced high and low, rich and poor. He chose old May-day, the 12th, as being more mediæval, and often quoted that pretty little poem called the ‘Tears of Old May-day.’

Such were his notions. Dr. Johnson was as primitive as the excellent rector of Hatton. His description of his marriage was in itself at once a proof of his early notions and of the

simplicity with which he avowed them. He used to relate the following particulars of his marriage (in 1755 to Mrs. Porter) with all the *naïveté* possible :—‘Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides. Sir, she had a notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog.’ They were, it seems, to ride on horseback to Derby, and set out in very good humour.

‘So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me ; and when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice ; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, and I was sure that she could not miss it ; and I conceived that she should come up to me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears.’

There is no doubt that Johnson owed the happiness he enjoyed at Streatham chiefly to the steady friendship of Mr. Thrale, and that his want of politeness, in an age of ceremony, was often offensive to Mrs. Thrale. For instance, having argued for a long time with a very pertinacious gentleman, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, his opponent said : ‘I don’t understand you, sir ;’ upon which Johnson replied, ‘Sir, I have found you an argument, but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.’

In the same spirit was his answer, according to Mrs. Thrale’s account, when she was lamenting the death of a first cousin, who was killed in America.

‘Pry’thee, my dear,’ Johnson cried, ‘have done with canting. How would the world be the worse for it, I may ask, if all your relations were at once spitted like larks, and roasted for Presto’s supper?’ Presto was the dog that lay under the table at the time.

But this anecdote was distorted by the venom of the narrator. It seems, from an eye-witness, that Mrs. Thrale, while supping very heartily on larks, laid down her fork, and exclaimed abruptly : ‘Oh ! my dear Mr. Johnson, do you know what has happened ? The last letters from abroad have brought us an account that our poor cousin’s head was taken off by a cannon-



DR. JOHNSON'S WEDDING.

ball.' Johnson, shocked at her unfeeling manner, replied: 'Madam, it would give you very little concern if all your relations were spitted like larks, and dressed for Presto's supper.'

When, in 1784, Dr. Johnson had the mortification of being apprised by Mrs. Thrale that 'what she supposed he had never believed,' was true, namely, that she was going to marry Signor Piozzi, his exclamation carries with it our sincere sympathy:—

'Poor Thrale! I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage. She is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over, and for her friends, if she has any left, to pity and forget.'

Selden—as Mrs. Piozzi, in one of her letters, remarks—says, 'that marriage is the act of a man's life which least concerns his acquaintance,' yet adds, 'tis the very act of his life which they most busy themselves about.' If this may be observed of a man's marriage, how much more truly may it refer to that of a woman. Mrs. Piozzi soon felt the full force of the remark.

Meantime, also, Dr. Johnson's spirits were much dejected by the death of his friend Topham Beauclerk. 'Poor dear Beauclerk,' he wrote, '*nec, ut soles, dabis joca*. His wit and his folly, his acuteness and merriment, his merriment and reasoning, are now over. Such another will not often be found among mankind.'*

Dr. Johnson was himself sometimes the object of his gay friend's satirical propensities. Beauclerk used to relate, in an irresistible manner, the following incident which occurred when the famous Madame de Boufflers was in England.

'When Madame de Boufflers was first in England,' said Beauclerk, 'she was desirous to see Johnson. I accordingly went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some time. When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner Temple Lane, when all at once I heard a noise like thunder. This was occasioned by Johnson, who, it seems, upon a little recollection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have

* 'That hateful Beauclerk'—Mrs. Thrale styles him. He was one of those men whom men excuse, and whom women of principle condemn.

done the honours of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality; and eager to show himself a man of gallantry, was hurrying down the staircase in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple gate, and brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand, and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty-brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck by this singular appearance.'

The far-famed friendship between Johnson and Mrs. Thrale was now brought to a painful termination. He who had been the friend of her first husband was not likely to be tolerated by the second. Poor Johnson! Most of the regret was on his side; and with a pang he withdrew from his beloved Streatham.

On the 6th of October, 1782, he took leave of the library there, recording 'his last use of it.' Since no act of his life was believed by him to be performed without the Divine will; since no era in that existence was even commenced without a reference to an overruling Providence, his wounded feelings sought solace from Him who was ever Johnson's stay and help. The following prayer, composed on his leaving Mrs. Thrale's family, cannot be read without emotion:—

'Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; equally trusting in thy protection when thou givest and when thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me! To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

After his departure from Streatham, Mrs. Thrale and Johnson met but seldom. During his long illness she paid him no attention. In the autumn of 1784 his death was evidently approaching. 'Write to me often, and write like a man,' were his words to Boswell. He would not desire expressions of



A SCENE IN THE TEMPLE—JOHNSON'S GALLANTRY.

grief or condolence. 'My dear friend, life is very short and uncertain : let us spend it as well as we can.' Again : 'Love me as well as you can.' Still, though a martyr to dropsy and asthma, he wished to recover. He died on the 13th of December, 1784, his last words being those of blessing, his last prayers for support in the hour of weakness.

Mrs. Thrale's marriage with Mr. Piozzi deprived her of another friend, poor little Burney, who declared Queen Charlotte 'was true as gold,' but who had a knack of dropping friends whose prestige in society was obscured.

Probably this friendship might have continued, had it not been finally broken up by the publication of Dr. Johnson's letters to her, and those of Mrs. Piozzi to the doctor, in 1788. A thousand painful associations were revived in the remembrance of poor 'Evelina;' but these were not the worst results of the injudicious publication ; for the anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, afterwards given to the world, imparted a bitter pang to all who loved the memory of the excellent author of 'Rasselas.'

Two years afterwards, the friends once so dear to each other met again, but on very different terms to those formerly subsisting between them. 'This morning,' wrote Miss Burney, who was then domiciled at Windsor, 'in my way to church, just as I arrived at the iron gate of our court-yard, a well-known voice called out, "Ah, there's Miss Burney!"

'I started, and looked round, and saw—Mrs. Piozzi.

'I hastened up to her : she met my held-out hand with both hers. Mr. Piozzi and Cecilia were with her, all smiling and good-humoured.

'“You are going,” she cried, “to church? so am I. I must run first to the inn. I suppose one may sit—anywhere one pleases?”

'This was all ;—she hurried on,—so did I.

'I received exceeding great satisfaction in this little and unexpected meeting. She had been upon the Terrace, and was going to change her hat ; and haste on both sides prevented awkwardness on either.'

Such was the rencontre between friends once apparently so attached. Then there seems to have been a blank, and a cold

reconciliation. The last letters that Mrs. Thrale wrote to her friend began 'Dear Madam,' and expressed thanks for being so kindly remembered. She refers to her first husband in the *léger* manner in which all her ties, all her hopes and regrets were expressed. 'Old Jacob' (her servant) 'and his red nightcap,' she says, writing to her former friend, 'are the only two creatures that come about me of those you remember, and death alone will part us. He and I both lived longer with Mr. Piozzi than we had done with Mr. Thrale. She regretted the change in the times, in literature especially, 'since *le bon vieux temps*, dear madam,' and styles herself 'Poor H. Le P.' Why poor, we cannot comprehend. However, we may blame the mother who consigns the guardianship of the youth of three unmarried daughters to others, we are assured from Mrs. Piozzi's own testimony, years after the grave had closed over both her husbands, that second marriage was not only happy but respectable. Piozzi—*such*, as Dr. Johnson said, an 'old dog, as well as an ugly dog,' but a good-looking man, a little more than forty—was amiable, devoted, kind, and a good manager of the fortune which his wife brought him. So long as he lived she incurred none of those debts and difficulties which would have soured a less elastic spirit than hers when in the decline of life. Perhaps in the demonstrative accomplished Italian—a man of education and respectable birth as he was—the patient heart that had known so little congeniality with Mr. Thrale, found at last sympathy. She well describes her feelings when she speaks of the strong connubial duty that tied her every thought to Mr. Thrale's interest, and the 'fervid and attractive passion that made twenty years, passed in Piozzi's society, seem like a happy dream of twenty hours.' It was, in fact, the difference between a marriage of attachment and a marriage of obedience. Yet she owns that her mind never did resemble that of either of her husbands. To a vain and flattered woman, the manifest adoration of Thrale for S. S. must have been galling. Even in extreme illness it was not to his wife but to Sophy that he turned, kissing her hand, roused by her voice, and assuring her that her visit that day repaid him for all he had suffered. Such scenes may be forgiven, but are rarely forgotten by women. To

do Mrs. Thrale justice, she struggled for some time with her late but ardent passion. Once she drove Piozzi from her ; he went to Italy, but returned, and they were married ; that event was a signal for a painful separation, and, it is melancholy to add, a life-long alienation between the mother and her daughters, and before her death she made over to the nephew of Piozzi, whom she had sent for from Italy, and educated, and to whose name she caused to be added that of Salusbury, the whole of her Welsh estate.

Perhaps no one has a right to be hard upon a woman who, even after forty, knows for the first time the strong influence of an attachment. But those who admire many earnest points of character and much generosity in Mrs. Thrale cannot but regret that she did not follow Dr. Johnson's advice, 'to settle her thoughts, and control her imagination, and think no more of Hesperian felicity,' to 'gather herself and her children into a little system, in which each may promote the ease, the safety, and pleasure of the rest.' All widowed mothers would be wise to follow such counsels ; but Mrs. Thrale thought otherwise, and in her daughters she had stern materials to deal with. Miss Thrale, afterwards Lady Keith, scornfully answered, when her mother offered to give her her estate that she might marry Mr. Cotton, that 'she wished to have nothing to do either with his family or her fortune.' 'They were all cruel, and all insulting,' adds the generous and relenting mother. They met, at last, at her death-bed.

In 1820 (Jan. 27), Mrs. Piozzi gave a concert at the Kingston Rooms, Bath, to celebrate her eightieth birthday. Dancing began at two, when she led off with her adopted son, Sir John Salusbury, dancing with great elasticity, and with the dignity of other days. She had a great notion that people could avert age by avoiding laziness and ill-temper. The following day she was as well as usual, and joked with her physician, Sir James Fellowes, on the justice her guests had done to 'Tully's' offices, Tully the confectioner having prepared the supper.

During the following year she died. An illness of ten days closed her existence with little suffering. Her daughters, weep-

ing, hung over her bedside, whilst an attending friend wished that 'all that had passed might now be buried in oblivion,'—a sad view of the last severing of the bond between a mother and her children.

Her last words were: 'I die in the trust and in the fear of God.' As Sir George Gibbes, who attended her, drew near, she traced with a pen the form of a coffin in the air, and then lay calm and speechless. Two days before her death she had performed her last act of charity by giving poor Conway a cheque for £100; this he returned, with much delicacy, to the executors, regarding it, as he said, as a posthumous benefaction, which more properly belonged to her heirs.

Mrs. Piozzi's death was ascribed, but erroneously, to an accident. It proceeded from intestinal inflammation.

Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi was, no doubt, a woman of extraordinary imagination and intelligence. Her wit, her memory, her power of allusion and quotation were wonderful, even among the highly-cultured set in which she moved. Her vivacity, even to the last days of her life, was unexampled. She had, as Madame D'Arblay wrote, 'a great deal of good and not good, in common with Madame de Staël.' She was generous and graceful in conferring kindnesses, but neither delicate nor polished, although flattering and caressing. She was sarcastic and fearless, and therefore feared.

In the anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, which she published, she comprised all that she knew of him, during the course of twenty years, into the compass of a small volume; and those, as it has been truly said, who read the book in *two hours*, naturally suppose that *all* his conversation was such as she described. She has therefore done him injustice, and her inaccuracy in many of her statements has been severely censured. To her misrepresentations the false views of Johnson's character which have obtained are assignable. Horace Walpole, who was, he declared, 'nauseated by Madame Piozzi,' talks of the horrid vulgarisms with which she stuffed her travels in Italy. One might, he says, imagine that the writer had never 'stirred out of St. Giles's.' Her Latin, French, and Italian were so 'miserably spelt,' that he thought she had better have

studied her own language before she 'floundered' into foreign tongues. The work to which he refers, 'Observations and Reflections made in the course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany,' was honoured with a couplet in the 'Baviad :—

' See Thrale's gray widow with a satchel roam,
And bring in pomp aborions nothings home.'

'If,' writes Horace Walpole to Miss Berry, 'you could wade through two octavos of Dame Piozzi's *thought's*, and *so's*, and *I trow's*, and cannot listen to seven volumes of Scheherezade's narrations, I will sue you for a divorce *in foro Parnassi*, and Boccacini shall be my proctor.'

Such was the sneer of one whose dictum, in that day, might condemn or raise any work, but whose satire could not injure, as a Queen of Society, one so rich, so gay, so comely, so witty, and so intellectual as the 'gray widow,' Mrs. or Madame Thrale-Piozzi.

One little incident, during her last days, evinces the kindness of her nature; and such a quality pleads so much.

Those who knew the theatres in the days of Vestris in her youth, of Liston, and of the elder Mathews, will call to mind a tall, gentlemanly young man, who began his theatrical career in the highest parts of tragedy, and closed it as a 'walking gentleman.' Even in that *rôle* he was too enormous for the Haymarket Theatre, and he had the unhappiness to be what old Fuller compares to a 'great house with a small cock-loft,' deficient in the high mental powers which we exact in performers. The 'Examiner' was then the great dramatic oracle; it fell on poor Augustus Conwry, and demolished him and his prospects. He was compared to Gog, and so maltreated that, from Hamlet and Macbeth, he came down to the office and post of prompter. He was, indeed, the child of shame and of misfortune. He was the natural son of Lord William Conway, by the daughter of a farmer. The poor girl, to avoid exposure, had been sent to the West Indies, where Augustus was born. He was thus descended from a family famed, if for nothing else, for their almost gigantic stature, and thus, hereditarily, he was

unlucky in two ways. His history reminds one of that of Savage. He hunted up his father, and at one time nearly succeeded in finding him, but no relief came. His parentage was acknowledged, but a family of unbounded wealth refused the least assistance. Driven almost to despair, he found at this crisis a friend in Mrs. Piozzi. It is true the most absurd constructions had been put on her admiration of Conway; but, at all events, the interest she took in his welfare lessened his misery. It is to be regretted that she did not permanently assist him. He was still pursued by the press; still unable to get relief from his relations. In despair, he resolved to try his fortune in America, and therefore embarked at Liverpool. During the voyage he was seized with temporary insanity, and in that state threw himself into the sea. Such was the fate of an honourable, sensitive, gentlemanly being, the last known object of Mrs. Piozzi's regard. In his pocket was found a bill of exchange endorsed by his mother.

Amongst his effects were found a number of manuscript letters from Mrs. Piozzi, which were published, edited by J. Russell Smith, under the title of 'Love-letters addressed to Augustus Conway, Esq., by Mrs. Piozzi when she was eighty.' But it appears that her expressions were those of the Della-cruscan school, romantic and enthusiastic, without any aim but kindness, any meaning but a romantic interest in one unfortunate and yet deserving.

It is curious, in reviewing the life of one who seemed to be fortune's favourite, to find how generosity, amounting to imprudence, embittered Mrs. Thrale's latter days. In 1815, she speaks, in one of her letters, of vexations and debts which had 'tormented her for long years.' 'But you who are a country gentleman,' she wrote to Dr. Thackeray, 'ought to know that a high paling round a park of two miles' extent, besides fronting a large house made by my exertions as if wholly new, and then furnishing it in modern style supremely elegant, though I thought not costly, cannot be done but by enormous expense; and, in fact, surveyors, carpenters, and cabinet-makers, have driven poor Hester Lynch Piozzi into a little Bath lodging, where Miss Letitia Barns has found her, two rooms and two

maids her whole establishment; a drawing of Brynbella, and by the fair hand of Mrs. Salusbury, her greatest ornament.'

Bills followed her—'small shot,' she called them, but mortifying in the extreme.

But there were other shadows over Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi's existence even before debts and bills followed her from place to place: amongst the annoyances to which the rich and good-natured are especially exposed, are the false friendships of those whom they gather around them in hospitable recklessness: this observation peculiarly applies to two persons who were the objects of unbounded kindness at Streatham.

The most flagrant of the culprits was the well-known Joseph Baretti. He obtained, through the good offices of Dr. Johnson, the post of Italian teacher in Mr. Thrale's family, and in that luxurious house at Streatham he lived nearly three years. During that time, he contrived to make himself intensely unpleasant. Insolent—'breathing,' as Mrs. Piozzi expressed it, 'defiance of most all mankind'—he assumed the authority of the master of the house. Every soul that visited at the house went away abhorring it. Mrs. Montagu even proposed to write an anonymous letter to Mrs. Thrale, on the disgust felt by her friends at the insolence of this foreigner. Every impertinence that he could devise against Mrs. Thrale—even suggesting not only rebellion against her to the eldest daughter, but pointing out to Mr. Thrale his second wife in Miss Whitbread—amounted to injuries. At last he took himself off with his cloak-bag, calling the house, where he had been so long harboured, a 'Pandemonium;' and Mrs. Thrale began to breathe again.

Mrs. Piozzi described him in the cleverest of her poems, the Streatham Portraits.

Baretti hangs next, by his frowns you may know him,
He has lately been reading some new published poem;
He finds the poor author's a blockhead, a beast,
A fool without sentiment, feeling, or taste.
Even thus let our critic his insolence fling,
Like the hornet in Homer, impatient to sting.'

With Miss Burney, Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi lived, as she wrote, 'in a degree of pain that precluded friendship;—dare not ask

her to buy me a ribbon—dare not ask her to touch the bell, lest she should think herself injured—lest she, forsooth, should appear in the character of Miss Neville's companion or that of the Widow Bromley.' See Murphy's 'Know your own Mind.' These disappointments in her inmates would have mattered little to one secure in the affections of her own family; but Mrs. Piozzi, in her first marriage, was a specimen of *la femme incomprise*. 'My daughters,' she wrote, (in 1781), 'are fine lovely creatures; but they love not me: is it my fault, or theirs?' 'Mr. Thrale,' she adds, 'had not much heart, but his fair daughters have none at all.'

'My children,' she wrote, 'govern without loving me.' There can be no doubt but that such a result is invariably the fault of a mother; and that not even the hereditary coldness ascribed to their father's nature could account for so unnatural a state of things.

Then the passion of Thrale for Sophy Streatfield, the cold, 'highly-principled flirt,' who contrived to keep bishops, and brewers, and doctors, and directors of the East India Company, all in chains at the same time, must have been very mortifying. And the worst was, that Sophy did not marry at that time; she was 'everybody's admiration,' but 'nobody's choice;' and general favourites seldom marry.

During the seventeen years and a half that she lived with Mr. Thrale, Mrs. Piozzi never but twice persuaded him to do any thing; and but once, and that in vain, to let any thing alone.

There is something almost grovelling in the conclusion of the Miscellaneous Extracts from *Thraliana*,* when she refers to her past life, and its troubles:—

'Well! let me do right, and leave the consequences in His hand, who alone sees every action's motive, and the true cause of every effect: let me endeavour to please God, and to have only my own faults and follies, not those of another, to answer for.'

* See Mr. Hayward's Work, vol. ii., p. 329.



LADY CAROLINE LAMB.

A Trick for Sheridan's Election.—A Sleepy Courtier.—An Army of Disgusted Editors.—La Femme Incomprise and Lord Byron.—Marriage on a Short Lease.—Lady Caroline Stabs Herself.—The Poet Hardly Tried.—Lady Caroline's Good Heart.—Pages and Teapots.—Lady Cork's Pink, Blue, and Gray.—Brave Lady Charleville.—Sunday Parties.—Tempora Mutantur.—The Author of 'Pelham.'—Miss Benger's Evenings.—Forbidden to be an Authoress.—Death.

WITH a fanciful head and a warm heart, the subject of this memoir represents the head of a clique which flourished during the time of Byron's brief career in society ; but which, for some years after his departure to Italy, continued to form one section of the *beau monde* in London. The daughter of Henrietta Frances Countess of Bessborough, and consequently the great grand-daughter of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, and the niece of the celebrated Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Caroline derived some portion of her distinction from those connections ; but for her celebrity she was indebted to another source. Her lustre was borrowed. With considerable natural talent, her works, had they been the production of one unknown to fashion, would have excited, perhaps, a transient attention : from the wife of William Lamb, afterwards Lord Melbourne, and from the enthusiastic admirer of Byron, almost any literary effort must have been thought worthy, at least, of a *sensation*. That they were not worthy of more, is evident from the obscurity into which 'Glenarvon' and its successor have dropped, in our own days of literary revivals and reprints.

Born during the latter part of the last century, Lady Caroline Ponsonby was reared amid the fading memories of Mrs. Montagu and the Burneys. Her mother had lived as much in

an atmosphere of literature as in that of exclusiveness, and her children were brought up with an hereditary respect for genius. Most ladies of rank dabbled in verse: strong political and weak religious convictions were in vogue: the great world has since then been tamed down, and its eccentricities smoothed into uniformity. In the youth of Lady Caroline, the shadow of revolutionary France still hung over society—still darkened, still misled it; and women thought their glory consisted in being romantic and peculiar.

The family whence Lady Caroline sprang were of Whig principles, and her grandfather, Lord Bessborough, was a member of Brookes's. But, with all his liberalism, the earl disliked Sheridan; and an anecdote of his daughter-in-law, Lady Duncannon, Lady Caroline's mother, is told, showing to what lengths female politicians will go on certain occasions.

When Sheridan's name was put up as a candidate at Brookes's two persons resolved to get it black-balled. These were Lord Bessborough and George Selwyn. They succeeded several times: the matter was to be put to the test again. The two foes resolved not to absent themselves during the time allowed by the regulations of the club for the ballot. In order to defeat them, Sheridan's friends agreed to try stratagem, and enlisted into their scheme the fearless Lady Duncannon. Seeing the adverse couple at their posts one evening when Sheridan's name was again put to the vote, they sent a chairman into the coffee-room with a note to Lord Bessborough, written in the name of Lady Duncannon, saying that a fire had broken out in his house in Cavendish Square, and begging him to return home. Off started my lord, and getting into a sedan chair freed the club from his presence. He doubted not the cause for alarm, since Lady Duncannon lived in the same house with himself. Nearly at that precise moment came a verbal message to Selwyn to request his presence at home, 'Miss Fagniani' (his adopted daughter, who afterwards married Lord Yarmouth) 'being seized with an alarming illness.' No sooner had he made his exit than Sheridan was proposed and elected. The two enemies returned without delay on discovering the trick played on them, but the ballot was closed.

By so eager a partisan, so complete a woman of the world was Lady Caroline reared. Under the influence of her charming aunt, the Duchess of Devonshire, did she receive her first impressions of the life she was to enter upon. As she grew up, the amiable, popular manners, the love of poetry, the taste and talent which distinguished her aunt, gradually opened in Lady Caroline ; but they were all weakened in their effect by peculiarity, and the absence of strong natural sense. It is almost a misfortune to have a desire to shine without the qualities to insure that end. Neither had Lady Caroline the beauty which, in her aunt and mother, set off everything they chose to do. She was delicate ; with a small pensive face ; never plain, yet not beautiful.

In 1805, a year before the death of the Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Caroline was married to the Hon. William Lamb, afterwards Viscount Melbourne. This nobleman was then a rising member of the Lower House, and already noted for his talents as a debater. He was handsome and witty, with a singular placidity of character, almost amounting to apathy. As a statesman, his administration was marked by many notable legislative enactments ; as a man his moral character was far from being defensible. At the period of his marriage with Lady Caroline, Mr. Lamb was one of the most agreeable of men. In his later years, either oppressed with business, or suffering from repletion, or from the effects of indulgence, he contracted a habit of sleeping, almost in society, and, it is said, even in the presence of the Queen, who graciously insisted on his not being disturbed. Whatsoever may have been the want of congeniality that soon exhibited itself between Lady Caroline and her husband, it never broke out into an open contest. He was wholly immersed in his career ; and never, although he was the friend of most of the famous Edinburgh wits, appreciated modern literature. Late in life, when prime minister, it was suggested to him by a certain literary baronet that men of letters should be noticed, invited, and brought forward. ‘Who are they ? Where do they live ? What have they all written ?’ was his answer. The editors of the leading journals were specified. ‘In France, journalists are raised by being made important—sometimes

ennobled even,' was also the remark. 'Pray invite them, dear B——,' was Lord Melbourne's reply. They were invited, and they came. The august rulers of public opinion were ushered in, and specially introduced by their patron, the baronet. So much wit, so much criticism had never before sat round the dinner-table at Melbourne House. All were prepared, were primed to shine ; but, before dinner was half over, his lordship was fast asleep : and soon after the repast was over, though not before the wine had gone freely round, the army of editors took their departure in some disgust.

In all her enthusiasm for what has been well called '*macaroni* literature,' Lady Caroline's clever, witty, handsome husband did not, therefore, sympathize. The fashionable pair lived as much apart as decorum permitted ; though Lady Caroline seems to have continued always on good terms with Lady Melbourne, her mother-in-law. Her time was passed between Brompton Hall and St. James's Square, in all the luxurious delights of a youth without care, yet Lady Caroline was far from being happy ; and the lady in '*Ernest Maltravers*,' entitled '*La femme incomprise*,' may certainly convey a notion of her character.

It was in the year 1813 that Lord Byron in his Diary refers to a friendship that probably had an unhappy interest on Lady Caroline's existence. This was between Lord Byron and Lady Melbourne, her mother-in-law, of whom the poet speaks as 'the best friend he ever had, and the cleverest of women.' 'To Lady Melbourne I write with most pleasure ; and her answers are so sensible, so *tactique*. I never met with half her talent. If she had been a few years younger, what a fool she would have made of me, had she thought it worth her while ; and I should have lost a valuable and most agreeable *friend*. Mem.—A mistress can never be a friend : while you agree you are lovers ; and when it is over, anything but friends.' To Lady Melbourne his works, and anything painful or agreeable that was said of them, were shown and confided. She was, like Lady Caroline, a neglected wife, treated externally with respect. Ladies of those days were well broken in to the position. There was no Judge Cresswell to release them at short notice. In

November, 1813, a few lines written by Byron in his Diary appear to refer to Lady Caroline Lamb. 'Two letters, one from —, the other from Lady Melbourne, both excellent in their respective styles; — contained also a very pretty lyric on "concealed griefs"—if not her own, yet very like hers. Why did she not say that the stanzas were, or were not, of her own composition? I do not know whether to wish them hers or not. I have no esteem for poetical persons, especially women: they have so much of the ideal in practice, as well as *ethics*.'

On the 10th of January, 1815, Byron wrote to Moore: 'I was married this day week. The parson has pronounced it; Perry has announced it; and the "Morning Post," also, under the head of "Lord Byron's Marriage," as if it were a fabrication, or the puff direct of a new staymaker.

Such was his announcement of that infelicitous union, the *dis*-union of which formed the topic of society for many a long day after the bond was for ever broken.

Miss Milbanke was the niece of Lady Melbourne, and must, of course, have frequently been in the society of Lady Caroline Lamb. Lord Byron, heart-sick, in debt, weary of a vicious life, and eager to form ties to which a disposition naturally affectionate impelled him, as it were, anticipated much felicity. Miss Millbanke was 'the paragon of only daughters,' to use his own words, and had been for some time attached to him, which he had not known, and had, indeed, thought her of a cold disposition, which he then found she was not. When he offered, he had not seen her for ten months; perhaps when he did see her, especially with all the odious preliminary of settlements on his hands, the charm was broken. The day of his marriage, he described himself as awaking with a heavy heart, and becoming more deeply dejected on glancing at his wedding suit laid out before him. His feelings at the ceremony have been described by himself.

'I saw him stand
Before an altar with a gentle bride;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The starlight of his boyhood.'

Nevertheless, in the very early days of that inauspicious marriage, Byron wrote: 'Swift says, no wise man ever married;

but, for a fool, I think it is the most ambrosial of all possible future states. I still think one ought to marry upon *lease*; but am very sure I should renew mine at the expiration, though next term were for ninety and nine years.'

Alas! his term was soon ended. A year afterwards we find Byron 'at war with all the world and my wife;' and begging his friend Moore neither to believe all he heard of him, nor to defend him.

While these events were going on, the peace of Lady Caroline Lamb was destroyed by one of those infatuations to which bereaved women, whose affections cannot turn into the one great natural channel, and neglected wives, are liable. Many were the rumours on the state of Lady Caroline's feelings for Lord Byron; and it was even reported that, being wounded by his indifference, she had attempted to stab herself in frenzy, during a large evening party. A romantic predilection, indulged to the extent of monomania, certainly existed. Any other woman's reputation would have been crushed by it; but it was regarded as the result of an eccentric and not wholly accountable mind: and although Lady Caroline, from that time, lost *caste*, she incurred rather ridicule than censure, and the incident was in due time suffered to die away in the public mind. Moore has carefully abstained from a reference to it, or, indeed, to Lady Caroline Lamb at all; so that upon recollection alone the occurrence rests.

The novel of 'Glenarvon,' in two volumes, is said to be a transcript of Lady Caroline's own mind. It is a powerful tale, verging on the immoral; romantic and improbable. It riveted Lady Caroline to that literary society which she henceforth found more to her taste than the aristocratic sphere in which she was born. Perhaps she thought with Byron, who thus refers to some of the most brilliant of those assemblies in London:—

'Last night, *party*' (Tuesday, March 22nd, 1814) 'at Lansdowne House. To-night, *party* at Lady Charlotte Greville's:—deplorable waste of time, and something of temper—nothing imparted—nothing acquired—talking without ideas—if anything like *thought* in my mind, it was not on the subjects on which

we were gabbling. Heigho! and in this way half London pass what is called life.'

Lady Caroline's literary circle comprised Holland House. Lady Charleville's, Lord Ward's, Lord Lansdowne's, and others of a similar grade. Of these *réunions* Byron formed the prominent attraction. But the crash had come. As little could be known of the *real* origin of the storm which chased Byron for ever from the chances of happiness in life, as of the changes of the wind, 'which bloweth where it listeth.' At the close of January, 1816, Lady Byron left Lord Byron to visit her father: they parted in kindness. On the road she wrote him a letter of playful fondness. A few days after her arrival at Sir Ralph Milbanke's seat, Byron received a letter to say that she would return to him no more.

Nine executions in his house within that year are thought to have accelerated this blow, though they ought to have stayed the hand that dealt it. As usual, Byron referred to its effect in few but telling words. He had parted with his books when he spoke: his embarrassments were at their climax. 'I shall be very glad to see you,' he wrote to Rogers, 'if you like to call, though I am at present contending with the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," some of which have struck at me from a quarter I did not expect them. But, no matter, "there is a world elsewhere," and I will cut my way through this as I can.'

Next we hear of his parting from his sister—his beloved, and, in domestic life, almost equally unhappy Augusta—to whom he addressed those exquisite lines. She had been his solace—she clung to him when 'all the world and his wife,' abjured him. So true is Lamartine's description of family ties, of the blood which binds far more strongly than any other human links.

'Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave;
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To pain—it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me;
They may crush, but they shall not contemn;
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them.'

On the 25th of April he sailed for Ostend; and the dream, the folly, perhaps the sin of Lady Caroline's imagination was

removed ; and Lord Byron, for the second and the last time, quitted this country.

Henceforth Lady Caroline's life was more prosaic, but perhaps more calm than when under the influence of this absorbing enthusiasm. Lady Morgan, who knew her well, does justice to the goodness of a heart that was often mistaken by others, or, as she terms it, the 'spontaneous outbreak of a good and kind heart, which, in serving and giving pleasure to others, obeys the instinctive impulse of a sanguine and genial disposition ; waiting for no rule or maxim ; not opening an account for value expected ; doing unto others what you wish them to do unto you. This, in one word, is Lady Caroline Lamb, for if she does not always act wisely for herself, she generally acts only too well for others.'

Lady Caroline passed some of her time at Brockett Hall, which she describes as a paradise, full of flowers and fruit. It stands, indeed, in one of those noble parks peculiar to England, rich in ancestral trees, with green herbage, and picturesque with noble alleys ; but the house is heavy, flat in architecture, with a poor entrance, smallish windows, a plain red brick exterior, all denoting the utilitarian spirit which came in with the last century. It is turned scrupulously away from a view ; and overlooks a piece of artificial water, with sloping pleasure-grounds on its brink. In London, Lady Caroline, when Lady Morgan visited her in 1818, received her friends in her bedroom at Melbourne House, at Whitehall, looking over the Park. In the bow-window stood the chair in which Lord Byron sat for his picture to Sanderson : it was fastened to the ground. Lady Caroline reclined on a couch, rather than a bed, wrapped in fine muslin. Her manners were always cordial and winning ; but she was by no means less singular than in her earlier life. She embraced Lady Morgan with all the cordiality of sisterhood in letters. As the interview went on, an amusing scene occurred. It was the custom, among certain fine ladies of that day, to have a page, a boy of fifteen or so, always within call : Lady Holland, Lady Cork, and others, each kept this pair of hands and pair of feet for their peculiar use. Lady Cork, who had figured as the 'Honourable and charming Miss Monckton,' in

Miss Burney's Memoirs (in which the original sin of toadyism perpetually appears), was now a dowager advancing in years, wishing to part with a page, whom she now sent for inspection to Lady Caroline, who was reported to have broken the head of her own page with a teapot some time previously. Lady Morgan had already been the vehicle of several attempts on the part of Lady Cork to get rid of her page. Like most ladies of that day, her ladyship had weak eyes: Lady Morgan was her amanuensis. 'What! get rid of your page?' cried Sydney. 'Don't talk, child, but do as I ask you: first, then, to the Duchess of Leeds:—"My dear Duchess: This will be presented to you by my little page, whom you admired so the other night. He is about to leave me. Only fancy,—he finds my house not religious enough for him! and that he can't get to church twice on Sundays. I am certainly not so good a Christian as your Grace, but as to Sundays, it is not true. But I think your situation would just suit him, if you are inclined to take him. Yours, M. Cork and Orrery."

'Now, my dear, for another note to your friend Lady Caroline.' Lady Caroline having been justified by Lady Morgan from the calumny of Lady Cork about breaking the page's head, Sydney began to smile.

'It was a Tory calumny, Lady Cork: and Lady Caroline was at Brockett, not at Whitehall, where the adventure was said to have happened.'

'I don't care whether true or not, my dear. All pages are the better for having their heads broken sometimes. So please write.' So a coaxing note was sent off to Lady Caroline, inviting her, after sounding the page's praises, to one of Lady Cork's *blue* parties, and giving her leave to bring any one—Mr. Moore, if she liked—to those famous receptions where 'tea and wax lights' in abundance, were all that Lady Cork thought of moment. The letter was signed, 'Yours in all affection,' although at the same time the teapot anecdote had been related.

Lady Cork, then in or near her sixtieth year, seemed to belong to another age, even in 1818, than that of Lady Caroline, beside whose soft muslins she must have come out like an old picture by Houbraken near a modern portrait of Hoppner's on

ink, Blue, and Gray.

Lawrence's. Her ancient form is still present among us, with her quaint manners, her native insincerity, her passion for society, and her predilection for stolen goods—not from any wish to steal, but from that slight aristocratic tinge of craziness, that 'bee in the bonnet,' which we find in most old families in every part of the world, in none more so than in Germany and England. Lady Cork having survived the Burneys and their clique, had a way of collecting her friends in detachments. Her pink, that is, her titled guests; her blue, that is, her literary *soirées*; her gray, that is, her religious tea-parties, were the amusement of the town almost until, in 1840, she at last went to the grave of her fathers. She was a very useful member of society in bringing pleasant people together. In England a little title usually dilutes a great deal of dullness; but Lady Cork's parties were more odd than dull. Who could ever regret passing some hours where, before a huge grand piano, a small form, with a broadish Irish face, a blue beaming eye, sat down, and playing, softly, almost a nominal accompaniment, sang one of his own lyrics in a voice of no compass, yet exquisitely musical, the artist of nature? Such was Thomas Moore, amusing when he talked, captivating when he sang. Mrs. Billington was quavering in one room at Lord Ward's, Moore in another, one evening: the professional singer was deserted, the poet's piano was thronged.

Yet there must have been more satisfaction to be found in the salon of the estimable Lady Charleville, another lady eminent in that day for her influence in society, than in that of Lady Cork. A daughter of the house of Cremorne, Lady Charleville, had been associated with all that was witty, eloquent, patriotic in Ireland during the infelicitous close of the last century. Lord Clive and Grattan, the opposite poles in politics, were her friends. She stood by Grattan's death-bed when Lord Castlereagh assured him that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey. She had joined her husband in his peril, as one of the district generals, accompanied only by her maid, and armed with pistols, when the whole country was in tumult. Like Charlotte de la Trémouille, Countess of Derby, of old, she remained in her husband's castle when danger threatened,

and recurred to those perils of her life with pleasure. Devoted to Protestantism, yet free from uncharitable prejudice, Lady Charleville endeavoured, by establishing schools for both persuasions, to benefit alike the Catholic and the Protestant. It was her firm belief at that time that the State provision for the Romanist clergy was indispensable. The result of years has not confirmed her views. Ireland is more Protestant than it was, and the Romish Church there is still unendowed.

Before the period of middle life arrived, Lady Charleville had lost the use of her lower limbs from rheumatism. When her drawing-rooms were thronged with the *élite* of London it was sad to see this excellent woman wheeled about in a chair, her son, the handsome Lord Tullamore, who married one of the beautiful daughters of Lady Charlotte Bury, performing that office. Yet she still pursued the accomplishment of painting; she still cultivated her comprehensive mind; still enjoyed the society of the good and the lettered, and until her latest hour the power of enjoyment was spared to her. Her fancy, her judgment, her heart were untouched by time. Lady Charleville took a very different position in the world to that occupied by the eccentric Lady Cork, or the kind but injudicious Lady Caroline Lamb. She was as much respected as beloved. At her *conversazioni*, Milman, the Canon of Westminster, at first as a young poet, then in the graver character of an historian, finally in all the sanctity of a 'Very Reverend,' delighted to converse with the gifted but unaffected hostess. Jekyl, the wit, *par excellence*, of that day, and the personal friend of the Prince Regent, there laid aside politics, and appeared to Lady Morgan 'the most delightful creature she had ever met with.' Luttrell formed also one of the clique of Cavendish Square.

The late Marchioness of Hertford, the favourite of the then Prince Regent, and one of the most courtly and stately of ladies of doubtful conduct, was received by Lady Charleville, and even thought to do honour by her presence! The late Marchioness of Salisbury, famous for her beauty in youth, for her Sunday parties, her rouge, and her *hauteur*, also looked in, and was 'civil.' This lady was burnt to death, in her old age at Hatfield. These 'Queens of Fashion' had mingled at Lady Charle-

ville's in their youth with the comic muse, Mrs. Abington, and with Miss Farren, afterwards Lady Derby—ladies, in their way, of as high *ton* as the stately though fallible Hertford, or as Lady Salisbury. Old people can remember Manchester Square and the Terrace of Piccadilly thronged with carriages on Sunday evenings : when whist and even faro were fearlessly played at parties to which every one scrambled for invitations. William Spencer, the descendant of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, was the fashionable wit, poet, and Adonis of the day, before Byron appeared. His poetry was like himself, polished, gay, slight : his wit enlivened many a country house, set at ease many a heavy dinner-table. Amid this varied throng attention was changed outwardly into respect when, met at the hall door by Lord Tullamore, and received on the very landing by Lady Charleville in her arm-chair, Lady de Ameland, who had in 1794 been obliged to lay down her title of Duchess of Sussex, walked in. Old Dr. Parr over his strange dinners at Hatton used to descant upon the noble qualities of this much-injured woman, who, he affirmed, had more royalty in her port than any of the English princesses. Beautiful as well as majestic, there was in her fine face, it is said, a trace of her ancestral relationship to Mary Queen of Scots : for she was lineally descended from the Regent Murray. Not far from this courteous and charming woman, Mrs. Fitzherbert's marked, high features, and clear blue eyes, serene as if no thunder-cloud hovered over her head, might be recognized. Then, led in, came the graceful Lady Sarah Bunbury, with whom George III. had fallen in love as she was haymaking at Holland House, but now blind, aged, yet still displaying traces of former loveliness : she mixed among a generation new to her, and seemed among them like a memorial of past hopes, and interests, and disappointments.

Time rolled away. Lady Cork survived ; Lady Charleville survived. Some of those who have thus been briefly enumerated, but whose separate histories would each form a subject of biography, had passed away. A fresh generation of authors, fine gentlemen, wits, poets, churchmen, and politicians waited upon Lady Caroline in her maze of white muslin at Melbourne House, or went to laugh at Lady Cork's gray or pink or blue

parties, or visited Lady Charleville in her decline, in respect and regret.

In the early part of the reign of George IV. a sort of resuscitation of literature succeeded a long interval of intellectual darkness. Scott, indeed, has illumined the Regency, and never can the effect produced by his 'Waverley' be forgotten. Its appearance brought new life into society; new light to the study; a source of pure happiness to the young; a veritable consolation to the old. He was in the wane when 'Pelham' was produced. Previous to its appearance, its author, one of the most wonderful men of our time, had circulated amongst friends a volume of poems, among which was one addressed to 'Caroline.' This was to Lady Caroline Lamb. Her vicinity when at Brockett Hall to Knebworth; her opportunities of meeting the author of 'Pelham' in the society of her husband; or at Lord Cowper's; or among a clique less distinguished for some other qualities than for wit; or at Lord Dacre's and elsewhere; inspired her with sanguine expectations of that celebrity which has been so complete and so varied. She patronized and she admired the young poet, and she was his confidante in his attachment, his fatal attachment, to her whom he afterwards made his wife.

Little coteries were then formed at the house of Miss Benger in the far-off regions of Doughty Street. Miss Benger was among the first of those lady historians who, in spite of the lash of the author in 'Fraser's Magazine,' 'that women should not write history,' have contributed much to our knowledge of the past. Without Agnes and Eliza Strickland, without Lucy Aikin, without Miss Freer and Mrs. Everett Green, and even without the humble and half-forgotten Miss Benger, how imperfect would have been our knowledge of female manners and of female influence in the middle ages! To women we owe the most readable biographical works of the day. Men deal better with history, but they are as much at fault in memoirs as in fashionable letter-writing.

Those who remember the reading-room of the British Museum in the days of Sir Henry Ellis—that dingy room, in which one took leave of cleanliness and light when one put off one's

clogs at the door—will recall Miss Benger—a thin, worn woman, more than middle-aged, with a sparkling eye, a countenance rather benignant than intelligent—the traces of poverty, but genteel poverty, in her dress, patiently reading through dusty tomes to compile her ‘Elizabeth of Bohemia :’ then, as the clock struck four, folding up her portfolio, and retreating, till regaining her umbrella, she found herself on the road again to Doughty Street.

Her evenings were, however, enlivened by inexpensive, easy, *willing* company. Of these Lady Caroline Lamb was the pale and pensive star. Her perfect dress, correct in taste, though her fancy was so fantastic in other matters, her gentle, courteous manners, her title, her carriage, and the thunders of her two smart footmen, all gave success to the *petits comités* of Doughty Street. There Dr. Kitchener, a neighbour, dropped in ; a useful, conceited man, the precursor of Soyer in his general views, a sort of Combe in cookery, with just and wholesome ideas founded on nature. There L. E. L. was first introduced to the literary circle of Doughty Street by a little woman in a turban, with sparse light locks, and faded gray eyes, and the slightest of all literary pretensions, Miss Spence—poor Miss Spence !—Lady Caroline’s shadow and worshipper—the friend of the kind Miss Benger, and of that woman of rare beauty and talent, whose fate the world then coupled with the author of ‘Pelham.’

Sometimes the coterie removed to Little Quebec Street, where, in a small room up three stories, Miss Spence, in her invariable turban, welcomed the noted and the aspiring of the day. L. E. L., then a girl of seventeen ; the author of ‘Pelham ;’ such other young men as she could entrap to her tea and muffins—reviewers, chiefly, or dilettante authors ; sundry old ladies calling themselves ‘honourable,’ but with a gone-by demeanour ; inferior professional musicians ; and Lady Caroline Lamb, ever polite, ever well-bred, and seemingly unconscious that she was not in the circles of Holland House and Brockett ;—these composed the circle.

These evenings composed the interludes between stately dinners and brilliant *soirées* ; and the incense she met with from *littérateurs*, probably soothed Lady Caroline for a severe

vexation. After the excitement produced by 'Glenarvon' had subsided, her friends forbade her to write. Lady Caroline had written a small *brochure* called 'Ada Reis,' and wished to publish it with Murray. 'Al I have asked of Murray,' she wrote to Lady Morgan, 'is a dull sale or a still birth. This may seem strange, and it is contrary to my own feelings of ambition; but what can I do? I am ordered peremptorily by my own family not to write.'

One cannot but think that Lady Caroline's family were not far wrong; yet descended, as she boasted, in a right line from the poet Spenser, from John Duke of Marlborough, and with all the Cavendish and Ponsonby blood to boot, she thought it excusable to be a little rebellious—since her ancestors were people of spirit; and then to be told to hold her tongue and not write by all her relations united—'what is to happen?'

Certainly poor Lady Caroline's letters displayed at this time a mournful and lonely spirit. We do not cite, in support of this assertion, those touching though unequal verses printed in 'Glenarvon,' in which these lines seem to refer to her own unhappy attachment—

'Weep for thy fault, in heart and mind degraded,
Weep if thy tears can wash away the stain;
Call back the scenes in which thy soul delighted,
Call back the dream that blessed thy early youth.'

We cannot rest on poetry, however rung from the heart, that pines and moans: a slight fact speaks more plainly. 'I am returned from riding alone,' she wrote one evening from Melbourne House, 'to find myself in these large rooms alone; but I sent for some street minstrels to sing to me.' 'I would,' she wrote to Lady Morgan, 'we had stayed a few days longer: your head, with far more of genius, has much better sense in it than mine; and besides, you have a better temper, and you have gone through more, formed yourself more, seen the necessity of in some degree considering opinions, although, as for the matter of that, you have got yourself exiled, so that you have not sacrificed your principles to your interest.'

The life that had so much of excitement at one time, of melancholy at another, was not destined to be a long one. Four years before Lady Caroline Lamb's death, Lord Byron

expired at Missolonghi. One would fain know with what emotions she heard of this event : whether the folly of her youth had passed away ; or whether she viewed, in the solemn summons to this gifted man to quit a life he had not well employed, a warning, a call to the worldly, the thoughtless, to seek forgiveness and reconciliation where alone is mercy.

Lady Caroline died in 1828. Her husband became the Prime Minister of England. He never married again, and his title is extinct. The early death of his only son left no direct representative either of his talent or of her social virtues.

We regard Lady Caroline Lamb as the victim of a mistaken education. She had some talent, great attractiveness, and a gentle nature. But her mind was weakened by the worst sentimentalism ; her time was wasted in brooding over her own feelings. The absence of domestic happiness, perhaps, made her more useful to the society which was essential to her than a happier woman would have been. She had good aspirations, but no judgment ; literary tastes, but no foundation of careful and accurate study. Her letters are scarcely intelligible from their involved style, but they display kindness, candour, and refinement.





ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER.

A Plea for Women.—A Female Aspirant.—Genius and Gentility.—Anne Conway 'Dared.'—The Beautiful Sculptress.—The Girl's Ambition.—An Unhappy Marriage.—Mrs. Damer's Early Works.—The Sculptress in the Wars.—Charles James Fox.—The Ladies' Demagogue.—Mrs. Damer in the Ladies' Canvass.—Mrs. Damer an Actress.—Walpole's Worship.—General Conway.—Damer and Napoleon.—Walpole's Old Age.—'Strawberry.'—Mrs. Damer Succeeds Walpole.—Garrick's Widow and Mrs. Siddons.—Joanna Baillie.—An Ambitious Scheme.—Anecdote of Castle-reagh.—Character of Mrs. Damer.—An Example to Sofa-Dames.



THE 'Emancipation of Women,' of which we have had so much nonsensical talk wafted over to us from the other shore of the Atlantic, till a small knot of our own fair spinsters have feebly re-echoed it, has been a fact ever since Christianity, by restricting polygamy, raised the one sex to an apparent equality with the other. Such is the common opinion, and certainly, since the introduction of a religion which placed marriage on so far more noble a footing than it had held either in Greece, Rome, or the East, there has been a large number of celebrated women in every Christian country. That there are more intricate causes to be assigned for it, is proved by the fact that many, if not most, celebrated women have been spinsters, and that every age has had a certain proportion of great female characters in spite of religion, want of education, or the repressive customs of their people. It would seem that every now and then nature adds to beauty, delicacy, tenderness, and all that is feminine and loveable, a proportion of mental energy that we are accustomed to consider the exclusive gift of the stronger sex; whereas, did circumstances draw out, or education develop it, we have yet to prove that it might not be as common in the weaker as in the stronger being. Certainly it is to circumstances and to education that we owe the

celebrity of the great women of the world; yet when these (which men almost always enjoy) have been granted to women, their recipients invariably stand out as marvels. What proof could we have had of this latent energy in such women as Joan of Arc and Boadicea, but for very peculiar circumstances? Would Novella, the original of Portia, who practised in the courts at Bologna, and by her woman's tact and ready wit often gained causes which her father despaired of; would poor love-lorn Héloïse have been celebrated for her learning at a period when science was reserved for a few priestly students; would the female preachers of Alexandria, the female doctors, lawyers, painters, sculptors, mathematicians, theologians, essayists, instances of whom are to be found in the annals of Christian Europe; nay, would even the Queens of Society and great lady wits of the last three centuries—have been what they were, if they had received the ordinary education of women? If we look into the separate instances, we invariably find that either some unusual circumstances have excited their dormant powers, or that their education has been from some unusual cause, the same as that given to men. Whether we may deduce from this that our present system of education for girls is a bad one, and that we should give them the same tutors and introduce them to the same studies as our boys; or whether it may not be said that the advantages of such an education are counterbalanced by a loss of that softness, delicacy, and complete innocence of mind, which are among the greatest charms of women—we need not now discuss. Certainly the *Précieuses* of the reign of Louis Quatorze, whom Molière ridiculed so successfully; the ladies collegiate under our own Queen Bess, whom Ben Jonson satirized in his 'Silent Woman;' the blue-stocking set of the last century, and our modern 'strong-minded women,' as they are shamefully called, as if a woman had not as much title to mental vigour as a man—are more admired than loved by men.

But there are some pursuits in which their very physical weakness renders women unfit to cope with men. Though we have had women-soldiers in peculiar cases, we have had no women-builders or female Stephensons. Though we have lady

painters in almost as great a number as lady-writers, so that in a work lately published on woman-artists we have counted more than five hundred of some distinction, yet we have had very few female sculptors. Anne Damer is one of those few, and a very uncommon woman in every respect.

The friend of Hume, Fox, and Nelson; the pet of Horace Walpole; a sculptor of no mean merit; an actress with whom Siddons was not ashamed to appear on a private stage; a descendant of two of the noblest and oldest families in England,—Anne Damer was nevertheless a most ambitious woman, in a way in which ambition becomes not only honourable but loveable. She had the emulation of a man, the beauty of a woman, the courage of a warrior, and the blood of the Normans. This last circumstance, an accident which is the least part of her praise, perhaps recommends her most to our lady readers, to whom ‘blood’ is the worth of blood, and who see in race a palliative of many vices and a high enhancement of a few virtues. In fact, since Norman seigneur sneered at Saxon churl, a Villiers or Montgomery may do with honour what John Thompson or Tom Johnson can only do with ignominy. But let us take Anne Damer as she was, a Whig, a friend of liberty, an enthusiast after her fashion, a strong-minded woman, perhaps, in the present day, but not a boaster of her family, nor one who, relying on the accident of birth, thinks she may neglect the culture of the individual mind.

Anne Seymour Damer was born in 1748, that is, in the days of the Humorists. Her father was General Henry Seymour Conway, a field-marshal, and a brother of the Marquis of Hertford. Her mother was daughter of a duke and widow of an earl—Caroline Campbell, only daughter of John Duke of Argyll, and only widow (we hope) of Charles Earl of Aylesbury and Elgin. Here was nobility enough to satisfy their only offspring, in whom it all centred, but Anne Damer was not to be satisfied with nobility. She wished for nobleness as well. It is certainly a rarity to find a man, to say nothing of a woman, *descending*, as the phrase goes, to art. That it is, indeed, a great *ascent*, the sensible of the present day, like a few of Mrs. Damer’s time, will readily admit. Horace Walpole saw

nothing degrading in his cousin's handling the hammer and chisel.

However, Anne Conway owed something to her birth. She was born 'in the society' of that day; that is, her rank at once admitted her to circles to which others climbed with much labour, much patronage, or much genius. They were not purely aristocratic circles. Had they been so, they would not have formed the London Parnassus of really great men; but it happened then, as it does often in the revolving history of the world, that the upper classes held in their hands the main talent of the day, and that the geniuses of classes below them thought it worth their while to work up to those circles. Literature had neither a profession nor a class then. Nobles were wits and wit ennobled. Wit included what we call the profession of letters. Men wrote less to be paid than to be admired. Patrons strove to be Mæcenases and mingled with genius. Genius, with a lingering love of gentility, strove to wear silk stockings, and did not despise, but rather sought, the applause of wealthy nobility. Samuel Johnson, the Tory, is a good specimen of the 'literary profession' of that age. He believed in that ambiguous term 'a gentleman,' and was not ashamed to define it as a 'man of extraction.'

Anne Conway was too enthusiastic to be a Tory. She was a lover of liberty and progress, and showed samples of both in herself, in the way in which she gave up 'society' for the use of the chisel, and in the stern perseverance with which she met the sneer of Hume.

That Anne Conway, a girl of eighteen or twenty years old, should have been walking with David Hume in London streets, would seem strange enough if we were not aware that the historian had about that time been appointed Secretary under her father, General Conway. Whether cumbrous David was pouring out upon his fair young listener his last cogitation on humanity, or whether she, in the liveliness of her disposition and her age, was belaying the worthy man with maiden fun, does not appear; but it is said that, meeting an Italian boy with a board of plaster figures on his head, David, in his love of humanity, talked to and tried to draw out the foreign lad,

and with true British condescension, having given him a shilling, which doubtless made the boy think the historian as near to heaven as Oxonians of the day thought him near to the antipodes thereof, walked away. Little Anne Damer, flirting after a fashion with the heavy essayist, rallied him playfully on his good nature. Hume, not knowing the verse of a then unborn poet—

‘Something God hath to say to thee,
Worth hearing from the lips of all,’

or perhaps in the height of his Toryism, unable to excuse himself on any such noble basis, made the following rather commonplace speech: ‘Be less severe, Miss Conway. Those images, at which you smile, were not made without the aid of both science and genius. With all your attainments, now, you cannot produce such works.’

Anne Conway was not a girl to be ‘dared.’ ‘Dare me,’ we used to say at school, when we nerved ourselves up to some wonderful feat of courage or dexterity. There certainly is a great incentive in being ‘dared;’ that is, our courage is impugned, our powers are impugned, our talent, wit, readiness, British enterprise are impugned. The boy who jumps over a five-barred gate only because he is ‘dared,’ is the same boy who, when later, the world silently dares him to make some grand enterprise, to colonise an Australian island, or convert a savage people, or cut a canal through the Isthmus of Panama, or build a bridge across the Menai Straits, or bring in a new Reform Bill, will do these exploits more or less successfully and achieve his fame. But we less expect to find this spirit in a girl of eighteen, a beautiful girl, whom we should suppose to be more taken up with admiration than ambition.

That she received the former no one can doubt who has seen Cosway’s portrait of her. The fair face is of a perfect oval; the ample brow not high enough to depart from the rule of Greek proportion; the delicate feature, and the luxuriant fair hair rising in rebel billows from her brow, and falling carelessly in curls upon her neck, are all beautiful in themselves. The features are marked, and the face is not one to forget easily: the nose is large and aquiline, but delicate: the mouth shows

strong decision of character, firmly closed though turned with merry smile. The head is well set on a long neck : the figure is slight and graceful, and is set off by the dress—a light one, with large rosettes, and an ample frill round the shoulders—all in that airy, graceful style in which Cosway delighted. But if there were not this beauty, the expression would still entitle the face to be remembered. The eyes, not large enough to be vacant, are full of thought and spirit, looking into you askingly but quietly. All speaks of a highly cultivated mind and taste—all is refined and intellectual, without the slightest approach to that luxuriance which one may almost call sensuality, and which in some women is irresistible. There was a full-length of her by Cosway at Strawberry Hill, taken evidently at an early age, and of exquisite grace and beauty. She is painted leaning on the pedestal of a bust she has just completed, with the chisel in one, and the mallet in the other hand, and the face, less arch than in the other portrait, here displays more genius and more depth. She is described as gay and witty in society, and, unlike women in general, holding opinions formed by herself on her own view of matters.

Well-read and observant, this charming girl might have been contented with shining in the society of men and women, whose names have even come down to us, though celebrated for nothing but their social successes, if she had had the ordinary ambition of a woman ; but being ‘dared’ by Hume to produce a model equal to those she had seen, she gave up the amusement of society, and, locking herself in her own room, prepared to astonish the philosopher. Wax and modelling pencils she of course procured, and with a large mob-cap over her fair hair and an apron to protect her dress, she worked away till she could present Hume with a head, said to be a portrait of the historian himself.

Always sparing of his praise, and the more so perhaps in this instance because the young lady was an arrant Whig, Hume merely remarked that the work was clever for a first attempt, but that it was one thing to work in a soft material, and quite another to handle the chisel ; and in this he was right. Little or no instruction will enable an observant and ingenious person

to model in wax or clay. The potters of Staffordshire, who produce those exquisite marvels in Parian, for which Minton is so celebrated, are often self-taught, modelling the clay while soft. But to handle the chisel and mallet with delicacy and finish is only the result of long labour and good primary instruction. Still, Miss Conway, having argued with Hume as to the supposed difficulty of carving, resolved to test it, and in the same private manner procured marble and tools and set to work. In a short time a rough copy of the modelled head appeared in stone from the same long delicate hand, and Hume could no longer withhold either praise or astonishment. He was justly surprised at the energy which undertook, and the talent which completed, an achievement in an art rarely followed by women, and demanding actual manual labour as well as skill.

This first attempt was probably nothing very wonderful ; but Miss Conway in making it contracted a taste for sculpture, in which, with her usual energy and perseverance, she determined to excel. As she had ample means at her command, she could procure the best instruction. Cerrachi, who was afterwards, in 1802, guillotined for plotting against the life of Napoleon, gave her lessons in modelling ; John Bacon, then a young man just coming into fashion as a sculptor, but afterwards celebrated for his monument to Lord Chatham in Westminster Abbey, taught her how to use the chisel, and she learned from Cruikshank sufficient anatomy to assist her in drawing her figures.

It was certainly fortunate that Anne Conway thus attached herself to the pursuit of art, for other ties which she now formed turned out far less satisfactorily. The Hon. John Damer, whom she accepted and married in June, 1767, when she was just nineteen, was the eldest son of the first Lord Milton, and nephew to George Earl of Dorchester. He was the heir expectant to a fortune of not less than £30,000 a year, and was bent upon squandering it before it came to him. He was one of a wild foolish set in town, whose whole glory was comprised in the curl of a coat collar, and the brim of a hat, and who made up for want of wit by extravagant display and ridiculous eccentricity. His chief delight seems to have been to astonish his friends and annoy his amiable wife by appearing three times

a day in a new suit. Such folly could only end in ruin. He had the common recourse of spendthrifts, and borrowed largely from the Jews. His wife appears to have borne with his folly, but to the dissipation of all affection towards him, and it is even said that they were at one time separated. However this may be, he went from bad to worse, and ended by blowing his brains out, in August, 1776, at the Bedford Arms, Covent Garden, having collected a wardrobe which sold for £15,000, and left behind him a character for folly and recklessness of the most contemptible kind.

Mrs. Damer, a widow, and without children, turned her attention now to the one object which interested her—Art. Young and beautiful as she still was, she seems to have had no thought of making a second marriage. With a view of studying the best models and obtaining the best instruction she travelled through France, Spain, and Italy, and now produced a number of works, which Walpole, with a pardonable partiality for his fair cousin, declared to be equal to the antique. They consisted chiefly of groups of animals and busts, among which was one of herself, carved in 1778, and presented to the gallery at Florence. Cerrachi, her master, took a whole-length of her as the Muse of Sculptor. It has been doubted whether Mrs. Damer did not receive great assistance in these works from her masters and her artist friends; but it is certain that even at this period she had achieved a reputation, enhanced perhaps by the peculiarity of a woman devoting herself to such a pursuit, and that woman, too, one of noble family. Darwin, though probably not much of a judge of art, yet gives the common public estimate of her powers when he writes of her—

‘ Long with soft touch shall Damer’s chisel charm,
With grace delight us and with beauty warm ;
Forster’s fine form shall hearts unborn engage,
And Melbourne’s smile enchant another age ;’

referring to the busts of Viscountess Melbourne at Pansanger, and of the Duchess of Devonshire.

In everything which Mrs. Damer undertook we find an amount of daring and spirit which is quite unusual in ordinary women. Her first journey to the Continent afforded an

instance of this. The War of Independence was at its height, and the Channel especially was filled with French and American men-of-war. It was really dangerous, as the event showed, to run the gauntlet of these enemies. The packet in which she sailed for Ostend was challenged by a French man-of-war, which it was quite unfitted to engage, yet could not escape. A sailing-match began, enlivened with a brisk exchange of shot, and Mrs. Damer undaunted as ever, was delighted at an opportunity so rare to women of enjoying the awful excitement of battle. The fight lasted for four hours, ending in the victory of the French, and within sight of Ostend the English packet struck its colours, and its sailors and passengers surrendered themselves prisoners. A more romantic page might now have to be added to the biography of a Queen of Society, but for the gallantry of the French. 'La belle Anglaise,' who was only in her thirty-first year, and therefore young enough to be still much admired, was liberated, and allowed to proceed on her journey.

As the companions of her studies among the galleries and antiquities of a classic land, she wisely took up classic authors. Homer, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Plutarch, Livy, Virgil, and Cicero were not too dull nor too hard reading for this spirited woman; and on the margins of these books she wrote her own impressions—rather learned than original—of what she saw. She was certainly an uncommon instance of feminine ambition. The same energy, which had roused her to prove to Hume of what metal she was made, was drawn upon in all that she undertook, supplied her with perseverance to carry out her less extravagant ambitions, and self-reliance sufficient to form others which were utterly unattainable. She certainly conceived that a great name and even great work might be achieved by a woman, who despised to be distinguished by her noble descent, and she lost no opportunity of warming and exercising her enthusiasm. This spirit made a very active Whig of her. Progressive in her own life, and in her actions indifferent to the common restraints imposed on women by the fancies of society, it was no wonder that she should be democratic in her political tendencies. Those were days when party meant something,

and politics ran so high throughout the land that women of all classes, from the fruit-seller to the duchess, took an active, vehement part in them. Mrs. Damer, following the example of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, of Lady Duncannon, and Mrs. Crewe, was a violent partisan of Charles James Fox, a well-wisher of American independence, and even an admirer of the first French Revolution and the general spirit of popular government.

Whiggism indeed meant little less than this at that period. Fox himself declared in favour of the principle of revolution, and the right of the people to choose their own rulers. With a father who had made an enormous fortune with little principle out of a public office—for Lord Holland owed the bulk of his wealth to his appointment of paymaster to the forces—and who spoiled him in his boyhood, Charles James Fox had begun life as a fop of the first water, and squandered £50,000 in debt before he came of age. In succession he indulged recklessly and extravagantly in every course of licentiousness which the profligate society of the day opened to him. At Brookes's and the Thatched House he ate and drank to excess, threw thousands upon the faro-table, mingled with black legs, and made himself notorious for his shameless vices. Newmarket supplied another excitement. His back room was so incessantly filled with Jew money-lenders that he called it his Jerusalem Chamber. It was impossible that such a life should not destroy every principle of honour; and there is nothing improbable in the story that he appropriated to himself money which belonged to his dear friend Mrs. Crewe. Of his talents, which were certainly great, he made an affected display; of his learning he was proud, but rather as adding lustre to his celebrity for universal tastes. He was not at all ashamed, but rather gloried in being able to describe himself as a fool, as he does in his verses to Mrs. Crewe.

'Is't reason? No; that my whole life will belie:
 For who so at variance as reason and I?
 Is't ambition that fills up each chink in my heart,
 Nor allows any softer sensation a part?
 Oh! no; for in this all the world must agree,
 One folly was never sufficient for me.'

Sensual and self-indulgent, with a grossness that is even patent on his very portrait, Fox had nevertheless a manner which enchanted the sex : and he was the only politician of the day who thoroughly enlisted the personal sympathies of women of mind and character, as well as of those who might be captivated by his profusion. When he visited Paris in later days, even Madame Récamier, noted for her refinement, and of whom he himself said, with his usual coarse ideas of the sphere of woman, that she was 'the only woman who united the attractions of pleasure to those of modesty,' delighted to be seen with him. At the time of which we are speaking the most celebrated beauties of England were his most ardent supporters.

The election of 1784, in which Fox stood and was returned for Westminster, was one of the most famous of the old riotous political demonstrations. Fox, inclined by character and education to despotic institutions, had taken up with the democratic cry chiefly from pique. George III., the most respectable of the Hanoverian sovereigns, had always disapproved of him. Fox could never push his way to the ministerial benches, but he could be grand and terrible in the Opposition. Loving hazard of all kinds for its own sake, he had made party hostility a new sphere of gambling, had adopted the character of a demagogue, and at a time when the whole of Europe was undergoing a great revolution in principles, was welcomed gladly as 'the man of the people.' In the beginning of the year he had been convicted of bribery, but in spite of this his popularity increased. In the house, the Opposition had always the majority, yet the ministry remained in, till, unable to hold out any longer, the king dissolved the parliament. The general election that ensued was one of the most exciting in a country which has few other excitements than elections to work off the enthusiasm of the populace.

The election for Westminster, in which Fox was opposed by Sir Cecil Wray, was the most tempestuous of all. There were twenty thousand votes to be polled, and the opposing parties resorted to any means of intimidation or violence, or persuasion which political enthusiasm could suggest. On the eighth day the poll was against the popular member, and he called upon his

friends to make a great effort on his behalf. It was then that the 'ladies' canvass' began. Lady Duncannon, the Duchess of Devonshire, Mrs. Crewe, and Mrs. Damer dressed themselves in blue and buff—the colours of the American Independents, which Fox had adopted and wore in the House of Commons—and set out to visit the purlieus of Westminster. Here in their enthusiasm they shook the dirty hands of honest workmen, expressed the greatest interest in their wives and families, and even, as in the case of the Duchess of Devonshire and the butcher, submitted their fair cheeks to be kissed by the possessors of votes. Owing to their activity and zeal, the election, after lasting forty-seven days, terminated in favour of Fox, who came in by two hundred and thirty-five votes. From this period Fox became Mrs. Damer's idol, and she afterwards induced him to sit to her for his bust.

Mrs. Damer was now thirty-six years of age, and though not so beautiful as the Duchess of Devonshire, and other leaders of society of that day, she seems to have been sought after in the highest circles of the London world, for the sake of her talents and her engaging wit. Three years later, in 1787, we find her displaying her powers on a new stage. Amateur theatricals had then come much into fashion, and among their chief patrons was the Duke of Richmond, the friend of Pitt. In the performances which took place at his great house, Mrs. Damer was the chief actress, and excited great admiration in the characters of Violante in 'The Wonder.' Mrs. Lovemore in 'The Way to Keep Him,' and Lady Freelove in 'The Jealous Wife.' She is described as 'the Thalia of the scene;' and certainly her beaming face was well suited to the demands of comedy, at a period when it had not degenerated into farce. This taste and talent for acting, she preserved throughout life, and revived in after years at Strawberry Hill, with Siddons and Mrs. Garrick to assist her. But the theatricals at Richmond House were attended by all the 'great' of London, who were admitted by cards, on which, to prevent confusion, was the notice, 'None to be admitted after half an hour past seven.' An anecdote is told of Pitt and Fox apropos of this limitation. Pitt had received a card from the duke for the evening on which he was to open

the budget, the 20th April, 1787, and knowing that he should be late, wished to return it; but the duke assured him that he should form an exception, and be admitted when he pleased. Fox, who was invited also, heard of this and put off going till the end of the debate, when following Pitt closely he arrived at the door of the great saloon at the same time with his opponent. The door keeper, who admitted the constitutional leader, wished to exclude the man of the people on the plea that it was past half-past seven. 'Pooh, pooh!' said Fox, 'I know that, but to-night I am a "rider" on Mr. Pitt.'

During the next ten years Mrs. Damer continued to shine in society and in sculpture at the same time. Busts from life and imaginary heads were her chief subjects. Among these, the best were one of Sir Joseph Banks and a head of Thalia, both in the British Museum; two colossal heads, supposed to represent the river-gods Thames and Isis, fixed on the middle of the bridge at Henley: and a marble statue of George III. for the Register Office at Edinburgh.

Walpole praises these works highly; but as we have had no opportunity of seeing them, we cannot say with how much justice. Perhaps he meant only to turn a pretty compliment, and try how the name of an English lady would fit into a Latin pentameter, when he wrote

'Non me Praxiteles fecit, at Anna Damer,'
('Not me, Praxiteles', but Damer's hand hath formed'),

under an osprey which she modelled for him, and which he set up among the relics which he enshrined at Strawberry Hill, and worshipped or pretended to worship as devotedly as ever Romanist worshipped the great toe of a defunct saint. That Walpole, however, whether calculated to judge—which he ought to have been—of statuary, or influenced by other causes, did indeed think very highly of his connection's talents, we know from what he wrote in 1780. 'Mrs. Damer's busts are not inferior to the antique; and theirs, we are sure, were not more like. Her shock dog, large as life, and only not alive, has looseness and softness in the curls, that seemed impossible to terra-cotta: it rivals the marble one of Bernini in the royal collection. As the ancients have only left us but five animals of

equal merit with their human figures—namely the Barberini goat, the Tuscan boar, the Mattei eagle, the eagle at Strawberry Hill, and Mr. Jennings', now Mr. Duncombe's dog, the talent of Mrs. Damer must appear in the most distinguished light.'

But there were certainly other reasons for Walpole's partiality. In the first place, Mrs. Damer was his connection by marriage. His father, Sir Robert Walpole, the celebrated minister of George I. and George II., and her grandfather, Lord Conway, had married two sisters, the daughters of the wealthy Sir John Shorter, Lord Mayor of London. In the next place, he was a friend and warm admirer of her father, General Conway, whom Mrs. Damer, with her usual enthusiasm, was wont to magnify into a hero. The general had been certainly a very distinguished man. In 1761 he had shown bravery and skill in the command of the British forces in Germany under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. He was afterwards a groom of the bed-chamber; but in 1764 was dismissed from that office and his military commands, for voting according to his conscience, and against the ministry, on the question of general warrants. Yet in the following year he was made a Secretary of State, and in this capacity distinguished himself on the great American question by his exertions to conciliate the feelings of the nation towards the Americans. Burke afterwards described this effort of the general's in glowing terms, and spoke of the trading interest of the country 'clinging about him as captives about their redeemer.' It was while holding this office that the general made David Hume his under-secretary at the instance of his brother, Lord Hertford, whose secretary the historian had been in his embassy at Paris. It was then that the intimacy commenced between Hume and the general's young daughter, then a girl of eighteen. Mrs. Damer intended to have made a statue of her father, and to have published his correspondence; but the one was never begun, and the general's valuable letters were destroyed after her death.

Among others whose faces Mrs. Damer's enthusiastic admiration made her anxious to perpetuate in marble were the two most celebrated men of her day, with whom she was acquainted—Lord Nelson and Napoleon Bonaparte. The former sat to

her after his return from the Nile; and of her conversations with the hero of Trafalgar she had some idea of forming a little volume. The bust she carved of him is the one which now stands in the Common Council Room of the City of London. A few days before her death, this active little woman, then seventy-eight years of age, made a copy of this bust in bronze, at the wish of the Duke of Clarence.

Of Napoleon she never had an opportunity of copying the stern, strong-willed features, though he promised to sit to her. Her acquaintance with him was formed in a singular manner. During her first visit to Paris in 1779, she had been introduced to the beautiful and witty Josephine Beauharnais, then a leader of fashion in that city, and their acquaintance had ripened into friendship. She returned, however, to England, and heard nothing more of her old friend, until one day a French gentleman called upon her, and presented her with a fine piece of porcelain, and a letter of invitation from the wife of the First Consul, whom she now discovered to be her former friend. Napoleon was always willing and anxious to conciliate the Whigs of England; and it can be easily understood that Josephine found it convenient to recall in this manner a forgotten friendship. After the peace of Amiens Mrs. Damer set out to Paris, and was presented to the great man, who charmed her with his conversation. She was known to be a friend and warm supporter of Charles Fox, and the First Consul expressed his anxiety to have from her hand a bust of the 'Man of the People,' and to make a present of his own to Fox himself. The former bust Mrs. Damer afterwards executed; and in later years, when poor Josephine was sacrificed and supplanted, she carried it to Paris and presented it to the emperor. Napoleon, touched perhaps at the sight of a face which recalled happier days, received her with kindness, and gave her his portrait set in diamonds upon a gold snuff-box, which is now in the British Museum.

Other samples of her art are to be found in different parts of England, especially in the houses of her friends, to whom she presented them. Among these were three busts of Mrs. Siddons and the two Kembles at Guy's Cliff, near Warwick. This interesting old place, which takes its name from the cave which

Guy Earl of Warwick dug out for himself to play hermit in, was at that time in the possession of a wealthy and influential family of the name of Greatheed. Mr. Greatheed was the friend and associate of all the great men and women of his day, and Anne Damer was a frequent visitor at Guy's Cliff.

Those who remember the sale at Strawberry Hill will be able to recall others of her works ; and this leads me to speak of her intimacy with its presiding spirit, Horace Walpole. The old age of that little-great man is not one to be despised. Gossip as he was, and trifler as he was, there are points in Walpole's character that command our respect. There is in all his writings, whether memoirs or letters, a spirit of independence and a breadth of view which rarely accompany a taste for archæology, the most conservative of all sciences. He was not a servile though an enthusiastic admirer ; he was not a bitter, though a prejudiced enemy. His love of art was sincere ; and in the present day his archæological tastes would have taken a much wider range, and probably have made of him a man of science. But it is in the constancy of his private friendships that he is most to be admired as a man. Old bachelor as he was, he had still a geniality about him that endeared him to all his friends. It is not surprising that the invalid should have enjoyed most the society of intellectual women ; for Walpole was the most refined man of his day, and it was in the women of those days that all the refinement was to be found. We have only to read the private lives of the great men of the last century to see that his almost feminine tastes were quite excusable. That refinement which he cherished was rarely at that time an accompaniment of great intellectual powers in the stronger sex. Strawberry Hill was an abortion of architecture, though not worse than many more celebrated attempts of the last century, and indeed of the present, also, to revive the beauties of Gothic ; but it was admirably adapted for the calm winter of such a life as Walpole's. The village of Twickenham, uninvaded at that time by a railway, sat calmly on the banks of a lovely river, which as yet knew nothing of excursion steamers or London cockneys plying their sculls in bright aquatic cos-

tume. At most a quiet barge, noiselessly floating down the stream, raised a ripple on its broad, full waters. In the village itself were stately mansions surrounded by jealous walls and glorious trees. It had an air of exclusive calm, a purity and peacefulness pleasantly contrasted with the bustle and business of London, from which it was at an easy distance. The old gentleman, printing his own works at a private press with his own hand, looked calmly down on the exciting life of the metropolis, in which he now took so little part, and was able to form a cool judgment of what there passed. In every room he had arranged with taste the relics that he had gathered in many years from the nooks and corners of Europe. The trifling objects which raised a smile on the lips of the modern purchaser some years ago had all a meaning and a history for him. They reminded him of those whom he had most admired during his life, and admiration with Walpole often rose to affection. Here, too, he assembled the small knot of friends whom he really liked, and chief among these were the Miss Berrys and Mrs. Damer. The latter was no longer young, but his junior by many years, and though nearly fifty years of age she had still all the *verve* and liveliness of five-and-twenty. She was as indefatigable as ever in her sculpture and modelling, and as charming as ever in her conversation. She had none of the cumbrous dignity of a dowager, but loved and delighted in every kind of amusement that offered itself. As he knew so well her taste for art and her respect for antiquities, to which was added a certain archæological acquaintance with them, picked up during her travels, it was only natural that Horace Walpole should have selected her as the guardian after his death of the treasures of Strawberry Hill. He left the house and all it contained to her for life, with two thousand a year to keep it up, on condition that she should live there and maintain the dignity of his temple.

In 1797, therefore, on the death of Walpole, Mrs. Damer took possession of Strawberry Hill. Here she collected around her the friends she admired and loved most, and from time to time amused them with private theatricals of a very

superior order. Among the pieces selected was one called 'Fashionable Friends,' a satirical comedy, at one time attributed to the former owner of Strawberry Hill himself. In this Mrs. Damer took the part of Lady Selina Vapour; and whether her acting, which is said to have been admirable, enhanced the amusement of the piece, or the piece itself was really worth the honour, it was thought good enough to appear on the boards of Drury Lane: here, however, the public condemned, and Kemble was forced to withdraw it.

For more than twenty years Mrs. Damer reigned at Strawberry Hill. True to her old plebeian tastes (we use the word in a sense of praise) she would not surround herself only with those aristocratic acquaintance whom she possessed in virtue of her birth, connections, and position, but preferred talent to the last. Her chief friends were the Miss Berrys and Mrs. Garrick, the charming widow of the great actor. This lady had been an opera-dancer at Vienna. In 1744, at the age of nineteen, she came to London, and was taken up very kindly by the Countess of Burlington. On her marriage the earl made her a present of six thousand pounds. 'I think,' says Dr. Beattie, 'I never saw such perfect affection and harmony as subsisted between them' (Garrick and his wife). In 1779 the immortal David died. 'No words,' continues the same writer, 'can paint her woe; and it would be difficult to do justice to the piety, resignation, and dignity of her behaviour on this sad occasion.' Certainly, too, she must have derived from her husband one of his charms in a social point of view, and the man who was unrivalled in spirited conversation must have imparted some of the same power to his wife. She talked English well, but with a German accent. Miss Burney relates a conversation with her at Mrs. Ord's: Mrs. Garrick was very cordial to the author of 'Evelina.' "Do I see you once more before I *tie*, my *tear* little spark!" she exclaimed, embracing her warmly, "for your father is my flame all my life, and you are a little spark of that flame." She added how much she had wished to visit me at the Queen's house, when she found I no longer came about the world, but that she was too *tiscrat*, and I did not dare say "Do come," unauthorized.'

Another intimate and particular friend of Mrs. Damer was the great Siddons. And here we may remark that if Mrs. Damer disregarded rank, she was not blinded by talent and merit to moral character, for as to Fox, her admiration was of his political, not his private character. Mrs. Siddons, though an actress, was always irreproachable, and Mrs. Damer could well make her her friend. 'In private company,' says Beattie, 'Mrs. Siddons is a modest, unassuming, sensible woman, of the gentlest and most elegant manners. Her moral character is not only unblemished but exemplary. She is above the middle size, and I suppose about thirty-four years of age' (this was in 1784). 'Her countenance is the most interesting that can be, and excepting the Duchess of Gordon's, the most beautiful I have ever seen. Her eyes and eyebrows are of the deepest black. She loves music, and is fond of the Scotch tunes, many of which I played to her on the violoncello. One of them ("She rose and let me in," which you know is a favourite of mine) made the tears start from her eyes. "Go on," said she to me, "and you will soon have your revenge," meaning that I should draw as many tears from her as she had done from me.'

The poetess Joanna Baillie was another of the circle at Strawberry Hill during Mrs. Damer's reign. This lady, herself a writer of tragedies, which, if never acted, still do credit to her good intentions, joined eagerly in the theatricals which Mrs. Damer instituted. In an epilogue which she wrote for one of these performances, she speaks thus of the Gothic villa:—

'But in these walls, a once well-known retreat,
Where taste and learning kept a fav'rite seat—
Where Gothic arches, with a solemn shade,
Should o'er the thoughtful mind their influence spread—
Where pictures, vases, busts, and precious things,
Still speak of sages, poets, heroes, kings—
Like foolish children in their mimic play
Confined at grandam's on a rainy day,
With paltry farce and all its bastard train,
Grotesque and broad, such precincts to profane !'

With such and many other intimates of both sexes, Mrs. Damer kept alive the glories of Walpole's 'favourite seat.' But in 1818 she was persuaded that it would be better to give it up to Lord Waldegrave, on whom it was entailed. She then bought York House in the same district. Here Clarendon

had lived, and here Queen Anne had been born, and it was no great descent from the dignity of the old house to shelter Mrs. Damer and her sculptures.

Though she was now seventy years of age, Mrs. Damer's ambition and enthusiasm were far from being worn out. On the contrary, they seem to have grown with years. Active and energetic to the last, she now contemplated some great work which should raise her name high in the annals of civilization as well as of art. Her relative, Sir Alexander Johnston, held a high legal appointment in the island of Ceylon. On his return to England she conversed with him eagerly about the state of art in the East. From him she learned what influence the wretched images of Krishna, Budda, Ganesha, and other Hindu deities, have over the minds of their worshippers. She conceived the idea that by introducing European works of art into India it would be possible to turn this influence to a good account—to replace, in short, the gods of the East by the heroes of Europe. Though this project has been laughed at as Utopian, it is a proof of the far-sightedness of this ambitious woman. Those who know India well, know the place that European art now takes among the educated Hindus of the three capitals, and are aware how much it is prized. The Rajah of Tanjore, the pupil of Swartz, was at that time engaged in introducing western civilization into his dominions. Mrs. Damer thought to aid him in this excellent design, and sent him a bust of Nelson as a preliminary to her great project. Probably she over-estimated her powers. It was scarcely probable that at her age she could produce works enough, whether good or bad—they would at least be better than common Hindu art—to effect any great change in the tastes of the natives of India; but we cannot but admire the zealous and well-directed ambition of a woman of more than seventy years, who sets to work on such a principle. We cannot but hold her up as a fine example to those ladies who long before that age consider their lives as unfit for exertion, and are content to settle down into useless and complaining valetudinarians. With most heroes and heroines it is youth that is appealed to in many a brilliant example; but here we have something for age as well. As

Socrates and Cato knew, we are never too old to learn : we are not too old in old age, but too proud : we have passed through the whole experience of life, and believe that, well or ill, we have fulfilled our vocation. Too often this is an idle boast. Mrs. Damer is a proof that we are never too old to aspire. She aspired to civilize India with works from her own hand : she might perhaps have done so, but death cut her off.

We may here introduce an anecdote of the Sir Alexander Johnston of whom we have spoken. We borrow it from Cunningham's 'Lives of the Sculptors,' in every respect a charming work.

Lord Castlereagh had promised to make Sir Alexander Chief Justice and President of Ceylon : on hearing which, Mrs. Damer, a Whig to the last, exclaimed, 'The fellow will cheat you ; he is a Tory.' 'Soon afterwards Lord Castlereagh sent express to Sir Alexander, had his commission drawn out, saw the great seal affixed, shook him by the hand, and wished him joy. This was late at night : on the following morning he fought the duel with Canning. Sir Alexander waited on him, when Lord Castlereagh said with a smile, "You are come to congratulate me on my escape." "Yes," said Sir Alexander, "and to say that I cannot help marvelling at your fortitude last night. Who but yourself could have transacted business?" "Oh, I had a reason for it," said his lordship ; "had I fallen before the great seal was set to your commission, you would have lost the appointment, and my cousin" (Mrs. Damer) "would have said, 'The fellow, sir, was a cheat ; he was a Tory.'" When Mrs. Damer heard this the tears started in her eyes. "Go," she said, "to my cousin, and say I have wronged him, that I love his manliness, and his regard for honour, and that I wish to renew our intercourse of friendship."

Towards her eightieth year, Mrs. Damer began to fail in health, and on the 28th of May, 1828, she left her ambitions, her sculptures, and her friends for ever, and passed into another life. True to the last to her art, she ordered that her hammers, chisels, drills, and modelling tools should be buried with her in the same coffin. Most unfortunately for posterity she added to this order that her papers should all be burned

There were among them several letters from Horace Walpole, and others as eminent in their day, the loss of which is a great pang to biographers. Perhaps to the last she was afraid of any slur upon her fame as a sculptress, for among her papers were her memoranda upon art, and with these, it may be, she was not satisfied.

Mrs. Damer's is a pleasant life to look back to. In moral character she was irreproachable. In disposition, she was fascinating. Her early life, when wedded to a dissolute and ridiculous husband, was not without its thorns; but from the date of his death she seems to have lived in a sunshine of her own making. She was always gay and lively. She was active and energetic to the day of her death. Her ambition was of a kind very rare in women. It was, indeed, worthy of a man. She is one of the few women in the history of the world who have taken up the hammer and chisel, and her success in wielding them is not despicable. Her works are always rough and unfinished. Delicate-handed herself, she imparted little delicacy to her labours. She aspired to masculinity, and seems to have aimed at it even in the roughness of her productions. But she was an ambitious woman, ambitious as few women ever are, and in her ambition, extravagant as it sometimes was, we see a heroism which we may not disregard. We are not inclined to set it down to mere vanity. The only child of so able and honourable a man as General Conway may well be understood to have been inspired by the highest motives, and her early success will excuse what seems undue confidence in **her own powers**. The intimate friend and ardent admirer of the greatest men of her day may well have felt a craving to be great too in the only sphere that opened to her. It is not indeed the part or even the right of all women to be ambitious. Domestic ties certainly claim the first place: but Mrs. Damer had none of these. Her parents and husband were taken from her whilst she was yet in the bloom of life, and she had no children. Whatever her place in art, her stand in society was high and excellent. Free and bold in all her opinions, she did not avail herself of the mere privilege of birth and rank, but aspired to assert only her merit, and to encourage that of others. She chose her friends

for their talents and character. She was free from pride or obtrusive vanity, and to the last a charming and lively companion. Her society was sought, and her conversation prized by great men ; indeed, some of the greatest of her day. She seems to have been free from ‘envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness,’ except in the one matter of political party. She could neither trust nor forgive a Tory. On the whole she is a woman to be admired, and may certainly be held up as a model of energy, activity, and perseverance to all languid ladies who happen to have no ‘encumbrances.’





LA MARQUISE DU DEFFAND.

A Bad Woman.—A Young Sceptic.—A Fashionable Marriage.—An Obliging Spouse.—Cooks and Chronology.—The President's Portrait.—Du Deffand's Portrait of her Lover.—The President's Opinion of Du Deffand.—An Old Humorist.—Friendship on Easy Terms.—Blindness of Madame du Deffand.—Her Distinguished Friends.—Mlle. de l'Espinasse.—The Refuge for the Gay.—A Heartless Woman.—Character of D'Alembert.—The Humble Companion.—The Rival Salon.—Vice and Wit.—Atheistic Society.—Sultan Hume.—Walpole at Paris.—Walpole's Squib on Rosseau.—Jean-Jacques' New Foe.—Poor Old Thing.—The Biter Bit.—Love at Seventy.—Horace Nervous.—Seventy Snubbed.—Tonton, the Detestable Cur.—Decline of Glory.—Du Deffand's Wit.—Grandmaman.—A Duchess out of a Fairy Egg.—A Sweet Temper.—The Warning Hand.—A Fashionable Death.—The Misery of Unbelief.—Ennui.

THE lives that we have hitherto set before the reader have been examples, some of virtue, some of energy, some of amiability: in some the social, in others the domestic virtues have been the best points in the characters of the women of whom we have written. All, at least, however frivolous, vain, fond of admiration, or even guilty of the grosser sins, have had some, if not many a redeeming point. The life we now write is a *warning*. Madame du Deffand had no redeeming points in her character. Bad-hearted, a bad friend, bad in habits, in morals, even at times in manners, she owed the wonderful empire she possessed solely to her wit. Her life is not only a warning, but perhaps the strongest warning which can be given in this world. Madame du Deffand had no fear of future punishment; she was tried by present calamities. They had no effect on her: she continued her evil indulgences: she was hopeless. And where is the warning? Where was her punishment? *In her own mind*. Never was woman more wretched in her later days; never did conscience pursue a sinner more relentlessly; never was life more hated by its owner.

And to modify this misery there was no hope of a future life, of forgiveness at last. No, as if she were not bad enough in every way, Madame du Deffand added the last sin of denying that God whom she had so long and obstinately offended.

Yet this woman was the idol of Walpole, and the intimate of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and many other celebrated men. That they were neither shocked nor disgusted must be referred to the state of the times. Madame du Deffand was a very bad woman, but almost good compared with some of her celebrated contemporaries. No one of any rank, but especially of the higher classes, could in that day cast a stone at her. France has displayed many phases of wickedness in her society, but perhaps she out-Franced herself in the reign of Louis XV.

Any history of the society of that time must necessarily be one of extortion and tyranny on the one hand, and disgraceful intrigues, dignified with the name of 'friendships,' on the other. To follow Madame du Deffand or any other Frenchwoman of the age through their lives would be simply to retail a list of immoral connections; and we must therefore be content to view her only from a social point, content to show how great was the influence of mind over great men and even great acts.

Madame du Deffand was the daughter of Comte de Vichy Chamrond, or Champrond, as it was also written. She was born in 1697; she was christened Marie, as are perhaps nine-tenths of the women of France. Of her relations the following are named: her father was Comte Gaspard de Vichy, of very old and noble family; her mother Mademoiselle Anne Brulart, before her marriage: her eldest brother served for some four years in the French army, and then settled on his estate in Burgundy; a younger brother, the Abbé de Chamrond, became treasurer to the Sainte Chapelle at Paris, and lived at Mont rouge in the neighbourhood of that city: the Duchess de Luynes was her aunt, and she had even a cardinal among her relatives, to wit, the celebrated Archbishop of Toulouse, Brienne de Loménie, whom the Parisians, perhaps with good cause, nicknamed *Le Cardinal de l'Ignominie*. Lastly, her grandmother was a Choiseul: and when, in after years, Madame du Deffand became very intimate with the Duc and

Duchesse of that name, she used to call them her relations, and even her grandpapa and grandmamma by way of endearment.

The education of Mademoiselle de Chamrond was as bad as that of most French girls of that—perhaps even of this—day. The art of pleasing, which certainly made society very agreeable, was the main study with these demoiselles, if, indeed, not the sole one. Marie was sent to a convent, that of La Madeleine de Trenelle, in the Rue de Charonne at Paris, and the only story of her education is that related by Walpole, namely, that she had, even at that age, doubts upon religion, became in heart and mind a sceptic, and thus induced her relations to send to her the famous Massillon to talk to her. ‘She was not awed by his character, nor dazzled by his arguments’ (writes Walpole), ‘but defended herself with good sense, and the prelate was more struck by her ingenuity and beauty than shocked at her heresy.’

We are not inclined to think that these doubts were maintained in a true spirit of inquiry, such as Madame Roland brought to bear on the question of religion. The same scoffing spirit with which she afterwards professed to treat ‘the philosophers,’ when offended with D’Alembert, must have given her the first inclination to sneer at religion. She declared a hatred and contempt for the clergy; at which considering the condition of the Romish church in that day, we cannot be surprised. At the convent, too, she had probably been introduced ‘behind the scenes’ of so-called ‘religious’ displays; and last, but by no means least, to Madame du Deffand, it was the *fashion* to be a sceptic. The wits and thinkers both in England and France laughed at the established faith, and it was therefore a claim to superiority of intellect to be an infidel. Thus it was very natural that Madame du Deffand should have asserted herself an Atheist. Probably she remained so in heart all her life, whatever she may have seemed to be. She did, indeed, make one attempt to turn *dévot*e, but retreated hastily from it in disgust. As to the sincerity of even this movement we can judge from the fact that, in agreeing to give up the world and her in-

dulgence, she made an exception for '*rouge* and the President Hénault,' as indispensable to her comfort.

At the age of twenty-one her father—for her mother was dead—married her to Jean-Baptiste-Jacques du Deffand, Marquis de Lalande, a colonel of a regiment of dragoons, a man of excellent family, whose ancestors had distinguished themselves by their attachment to the Dukes of Burgundy, and, we are told, a man of 'weak character and a tiresome companion.' There is no likelihood that there was, either before or after marriage, the slightest affection between these two. That was an age of bad fashions, and Madame du Deffand seems to have been bent on following the worst of them. It was the fashion, besides being immoral and unbelieving, to separate as soon as possible from your husband. What has become, Madame, of that poor little man I used so often to meet here, and who never opened his mouth?'—'Oh, that was my husband; he is dead.' This was an actual conversation of the day. Madame du Deffand could not, of course, make herself appear singular; and on the principle—often a very convenient one—of doing at Rome what the Romans do, she managed ere long to relieve herself of the disagreeable encumbrance. As the unfortunate young man is only a cipher in her existence, and will not appear again upon the scene, we may as well at once dispose of him. He lived chiefly with his father in the country, and did not interfere with his wife in any way. Some ten years later, however, she took it into her head to be again united to him. A fortune had been left her, and she had as yet no family to inherit it. She sent, therefore, for the gentleman whose name she bore: complacently enough he came at once; and for six weeks was allowed to take his meals at his wife's house. The sacrifice on her part must be considered a great one, for she actually gave up her *cicisbeo* in order to receive back her wedded mate. The lover was disgusted; and so, in fact, was Madame du Deffand. At the end of the six weeks she found that she could not put up with the marquis, though we are not told that he was any way offensive, except in the misfortune of being her husband. She showed him by her black looks that he bored her, and he had, at least, sense enough to perceive it, and return to his *chasse* in

Burgundy. A letter from her friend, the unfortunate Mdlle. d'Aissé, will best describe the rest of the affair. 'She takes every imaginable measure to prevent his returning. I have pointed out to her in strong terms the impropriety of her proceedings. She tried to touch me by complaints and pleadings: I was firm, and passed three weeks without seeing her; on which she came to me. There is no kind of ignominy to which she did not descend to induce me not to give her up. * * * She cried a great deal, but could not affect me. The end of this miserable line of conduct is, that she has no one to live with, and, that a lover she had, before trying to conciliate her husband, has left her in disgust; and when he heard that she was getting on well with M. du Deffand wrote her a letter full of reproaches. He returned. Her *amour propre* having roused again the half-extinguished flame, this worthy lady again followed her inclination, and not reflecting upon her position, thought a lover was better than a husband, and dismissed the latter to make room for the former. The consequence is, that she is the talk of society; everybody blames her, her lover despises, her friends abandon her, and she is at a loss to get out of the scrape. She "throws herself at one's head" in order to show that she is not cut, but without success; pride and confusion influence her by turns.'

Doubtful as it is whether the writer of this letter blames her most for having taken back her husband or for having again dismissed him, it is a comfort, in reading it, to learn that her conduct reflected some public reproach upon her, and that the society of Paris—at least that in which Mdlle. d'Aissé moved—was not blinded by her social talents to overlook her domestic vices.

We pass over with pleasure the long story of her various 'friendships,' but there is one which we cannot avoid noticing. The President Hénault, of whom mention has already been made, was a standing dish with *La du Deffand*. The President was celebrated in his day, which, thank heaven, is over, for two things—his work called 'L'Abrégé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France,' and his cook. Voltaire wrote of him—

'Hénault, fameux pour vos soupers
Et votre Chronologie.' . . .

Walpole thus describes him : 'The old President Hénault is the pagod at Madame du Deffand's, an old blind debauchée of wit, where I supped last night' (such are the flattering terms in which this man of society described that woman of society whom he afterwards called his queen and his one idea). 'The President is very near deaf, and much nearer superannuated. He sits by the table. 'The mistress of the house, who formerly' (this letter was written in 1765, when Madame du Deffand was sixty-eight years old) 'was his, inquires after every dish on the table, is told who has eaten of which, and then bawls the bill of fare of every individual into the President's ears. In short, every mouthful is proclaimed, and so is every blunder I make against grammar. Some that I make on purpose succeed ; and one of them is to be reported to the queen to-day by Hénault, who is her great favourite. I had been at Versailles, and having been much taken notice of by her Majesty, I said, alluding to Madame Sévigné, "*La Reine est le plus grand roi du monde.*"

Later Walpole says : 'The old President Hénault made me a visit yesterday : he is extremely amiable, but has the appearance of a superannuated bacchanal ; superannuated, poor soul, indeed he is !' 'My press is revived, and is printing a French play written by the old President Hénault. It was damned many years ago at Paris, and yet I think it is better than some that have succeeded, and much better than any of *our* modern tragedies. I print it to please the old man, as he was exceedingly kind to me at Paris ; but I doubt whether he will live till it is finished.' The play in question was '*Cornélie*,' and the author was at this time eighty-four years of age. He was thirteen years older than Madame du Deffand.

So much for the President ; but it is always satisfactory to see people through their own admirers' eyes. Here are extracts from two portraits—the one written by Du Deffand of the President, the other written by the President of Du Deffand. Let us, however, first premise that portrait-writing was the fashion of the age ; that it was used often as a means of flatter-

ing, oftener still to dissimulate real feelings towards an object ; that these portraits were circulated in a certain set, in which both the object and artists were familiars, and that, necessarily, they were, to a certain extent, *varnished*, though with a great pretence of frankness.

Portrait of the President Hénault, by Madame du Deffand.

‘All the President’s qualities, and even his defects, are in favour of society : his vanity gives him a great desire to please ; his ease makes all characters his friends ; and his weakness seems only to take from his virtues any wildness and boldness they may have in others.

‘His feelings are delicate, but his mind is too ready to relieve, or even dispossess them ; and as the heart rarely needs an interpreter, one might be sometimes tempted to believe that he only thinks what he pretends to feel ; he seems to give the lie to La Rochefoucauld, and would perhaps make him say in the present day that the heart is often the dupe of the head.

‘All combines to make him a most agreeable man of society : he pleases some by his good qualities, others by his very defects. He is impetuous in all his actions, his arguments, and his praises ; he always seems to be touched to the quick by the sights he views and the subjects he treats ; but he passes so rapidly from the greatest vehemence to the most complete indifference, that one can easily perceive that if his spirit is quickly, it is also seldom, affected. This impetuosity, which would be a defect in others, is almost a good quality in him , it gives all his actions an air of meaning and feeling, very pleasing to the common herd : every one believes that he has lit up in him a warm interest ; and he has gained as many friends by this characteristic as by his really estimable points. * * Ambition and interest are unknown to him ; softer passions move him. * * He adds to a clever mind much grace and delicacy : he is the best company in the world.’ (This comes from Madame du Deffand, remember.) ‘His conversation is full of neat and amusing turns, never degenerating into puns or personal remarks. He

is rich in talents, and treats every subject with equal ability, whether serious or jocular. In fact, M. de Hénault is one of those men of the world who unite most discordant qualities, and whose mind and agreeableness are generally acknowledged.'

Portrait of Madame du Deffand, by M. le Président Hénault.

'Madame du Deffand lived at Sceaux, where she passed the greater part of the year. * * * In the winter she resided in a small house in the Rue de Beaune, seeing little society. The moment she was free' (to wit, had sent away her husband), 'she made many acquaintances, and in a short time they had so increased that her rooms could not hold them. She gave a supper every evening, and afterwards took an apartment in the Convent of Saint Joseph. Her means were increased by the death of her husband, and she had about twenty thousand livres per annum. No woman ever had more friends nor deserved them more. Friendship was with her a passion, in consideration of which you could pardon her extreme fastidiousness: the smallness of her means did not militate against her popularity; and she soon collected around her the best and most brilliant society, the members of which she made her slaves. A good heart, noble and generous, always employed in usefulness, a keen judgment, a pleasant fancy, and a gaiety which imparted to her youth (I speak of her later years, for in earlier days she had been attractive in person), a cultivated mind, which did not obtrude itself at a time when she sought only to amuse herself: such were her characteristics. It is much to be desired that her writings should not be lost. Madame de Sévigné would not be the only woman to quote in that case. But who would believe it?—I speak of a blind woman. This misfortune altered neither her wit nor her temper. It might be said that sight was a superfluous sense for her; the sound of the voice sufficed to describe every object; and she was just as *à propos* as if she had had the use of her eyes. Still, not to appear prejudiced in her favour, I must own that age, while it did not destroy her talents, made her jealous and distrustful' (it is the President who says this), 'and that she was influenced by first

impressions, and had not the art of leading those of whom she had been accustomed to dispose summarily. In short, she had an unequal and virulent temper, though always charming to those whom she cared to please ; and, I may say, was the person who has made me at once the happiest, and the most unhappy man, for she is the woman I have most loved.'

As a key to these two characters, we must cite the words of Marmontel, who asserts that 'she played the tyrant over the President Hénault, who, timid by nature, remained the slave of fear when he ceased to be the slave of love.' He corresponded with her regularly whenever absent, which was not often. His letters do not show the same amount of talent as those of most of her correspondents, and are chiefly filled with gossip and details about common friends or common foes. The President doubtless knew that these details were precisely what Madame du Deffand liked most ; for Walpole, in the commencement of his acquaintance with her, says that she was 'delicious when he could take her fifty years back,' but that she was as eager about the current gossip of her day as he himself was about that of a past generation.

The friendship with the President lasted in the firmest manner until his death. Another equally long was not on such affectionate terms. M. Pont de Veyle is thus described by Walpole : 'She has an old friend whom I must mention, a Monsieur Pont de Veyle, author of the "Fat Puni," and the "Complaisant," and of those pretty novels, the "Comte de Cominges," the "Siege of Calais," and "Les Malheurs de l'Amour."' Would you not expect this old man to be very agreeable ? He can be so, but seldom is ; yet he has another very different and very amusing talent, the art of parody, and is unique in his kind. He composes tales to the tunes of long dances ; for instance, he has adapted the Regent's Daphnis and Chloe to one, and made it ten times more indecent ; but is so old, and sings so well, that it is permitted in all companies. * * * With all this he has not the least idea of cheerfulness in conversation ; seldom speaks except on grave subjects, and not often on them ; is a humourist, very supercilious,

and wrapt up in admiration of his own country, as the only judge of his merit. His air and look are cold and forbidding; but ask him to sing, or praise his works, his eyes and smiles open and brighten up.' He ends by referring him to the self-applauding poet in the second print of Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress' for an exact likeness of Monsieur Pont de Veyle. However, Walpole, some years later, himself printed at Strawberry Hill a translation of one of this disagreeable old gentleman's plays, 'The Sleep-walker,' which the famous Margravine of Anspach, at that time Lady Craven, had done into English.

Of the nature of Madame du Deffand's friendship for this elderly author, we have an amusing specimen in Baron de Grimm's 'Historical Anecdotes,' under date of August, 1778. 'Figure to yourself Madame du Deffand, blind, seated in her dressing-room in an easy chair, which resembles the tub of Diogenes, with her old friend, M. Pont de Veyle, lolling in a *bergère* on the other side of the chimney. Such is the scene, such the actors, and the following is the substance of one of their recent conversations:—

“ Pont de Veyle !”

“ Madame.”

“ Where are you ?”

“ On the other side of your chimney.”

“ Lolling in your chair, with your feet upon the dogs, as we should do with our friends ?”

“ Yes, madame.”

“ It must be owned that there are few friendships in the world of so old a date as ours.”

“ Very true.”

“ It has lasted fifty years.”

“ Yes, more than fifty.”

“ And in all that time no cloud has intervened, no shadow of a quarrel.”

“ That is what I have always admired.”

“ But, Pont de Veyle, has it not been because at bottom we were always *extremely indifferent* the one to the other ?”

“ That may very possibly be the case, madame.”

Nearly sixty years of Madame du Deffand's life had passed

in the reckless pursuit of pleasure, in self-indulgence, and indifference to all the serious claims of this life and terrible prospects of the next, when the hand of God mercifully smote her in a manner which in any other woman would have produced a complete change, if not actual repentance. In 1752 her sight began to fail, and became so weak as to oblige her to employ an amanuensis. For two years it continued to grow worse and worse, and in 1754 she became totally blind. Voltaire speaks thus of the calamity: 'What you tell me of Madame du Deffand's eyes gives me great pain. They were formerly very fine and very bright. Why must one always be punished in what one has sinned? and what a rage has Nature for destroying her own fairest works! At any rate, Madame du Deffand retains her wit, which is even more brilliant than her eyes.' He also sent her the following pretty little poem, when his own sight began to give way:—

'Où, je perds les deux yeux ; vous les avez perdus,
O sage Du Deffand ! est-ce une grande perte ?
Du moins nous ne reverrons plus
Les sots dont la terre est couverte.
Et puis tout est aveugle en cet humain séjour ;
On ne va qu'à tâtons sur la terre et sur l'onde ;
On a les yeux bouchés à la ville, à la cour ;
Plutus, la Fortune, et l'Amour
Sont trois aveugle-nés qui gouvernent le monde.'

She appears to have borne the infliction with fortitude at first ; but in later years, without the consolation of religion, or even of sensible pursuits, she murmured against this punishment, and felt how helpless it made her life, how completely it left her to the mercy of others, on whom she could not always depend. She managed, however, to make the loss as little felt as possible in society. She always turned her eyes (which remained closed) towards the person to whom she was speaking, and as, in these later years, her mode of life rarely altered, and even her friends and acquaintance were mostly the same, and regular in their daily visits, she became expert in the use of her ears—her sense of hearing being very keen—and was able to mix in the conversation without any marked difference from those who possessed the use of their eyes. In early youth she is described as beautiful ; but we can find no traces of beauty

in the portrait which was taken of her after her blindness. The features were small and neat, the complexion delicate, but that is all. The face is too long, and the expression, though mild, is by no means interesting.

Madame du Deffand's real life begins, however, at this period. This very infliction was softened to her by bringing around her more closely all the great thinkers with whom she had before been acquainted, chiefly in virtue of her position among the aristocracy ; for thinkers of those days always pressed forward, or were often sought for, into the upper circles of society, in which alone were to be found education and refinement. Indeed it seems to have been no crime to turn toad-eater ; and Voltaire himself, the forerunner of a revolution against the aristocracy, was proud and delighted to be admitted into its coteries.

In 'the blind old woman,' still surrounded by adorers and admirers, the thinking men thought, truly enough, that there must be real wit to allure and keep the same friends in spite of her misfortune ; and they were not mistaken. Madame du Deffand, bad in every other point, was as good as any of them in the head. Among these acquaintances, who now became friends, were Voltaire and D'Alembert. Both corresponded with her ; and indeed the names of her correspondents would alone suffice as a proof of her popularity among the clever men of the day. Among others were Montesquieu, Madame de Staal, the companion of the Duchesse du Maine, the Chevalier d'Aydie, and the President Hénault. Besides Walpole, too, she had a number of English friends, such as Hume, Wilkes, George Selwyn, and Lords Bath, Bulkeley, and Holderness. But the name of D'Alembert introduces a celebrated quarrel, which almost sufficed to divide all these friends into two parties, according as they condemned or approved Madame du Deffand's conduct in the matter. Marmontel in his 'Memoirs' does the former ; Walpole, naturally, the latter. We confess that, from what we can learn of this lady's character, we are inclined to side with Marmontel.

The blindness with which she was afflicted induced Madame du Deffand to take to herself a companion and amanuensis in

the person of Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, who is celebrated for her letters, which have been published, and for her *liaison* with D'Alembert, which was also published. She was the natural daughter of Madame d'Albon, the mother of the Marquise de Vichy, and was born at Lyons in 1732. She was taken, after the death of her mother, into the house of the Marquis de Vichy, as governess to their children, and humble companion to themselves; but the manner in which they treated her was such as to induce her to leave them, and retire to a convent, with no more than the sum of 300 francs (£12) a year, which her mother had left her. An agreeable trait in her character is related by Madame du Deffand herself. It appears that at her death Madame d'Albon had told her of this legacy, and, in addition, given her the key of a chest in which was a very considerable sum of money, which she had kept for her. Immediately after her mother's death she went to M. d'Albon, the son, placed this key in his hands, and insisted that he should appropriate the contents of the chest, to which, she maintained, he had a better right than herself; and this generous offer he accepted. Madame du Deffand tried to persuade her to remain with the Vichys at Chamrond, but in vain, and she retired to the convent. After an affectionate correspondence of two years, in letters in which these ladies, after a fashion of the day, style one another 'Ma Reine,' Madame du Deffand proposed to take her as companion into her own house. The proposal was accepted, and for a while all went well, for the elder lady did not clash with the younger one, who, though only two-and-twenty, and very engaging in manners, was not pretty, and was pitted with the small-pox.

Madame du Deffand had at this time an apartment in the Convent of St. Joseph, in the Rue St. Dominique. This convent had been endowed by Madame de Montespan, who had taken care to have a portion of it separated from the main building in such a manner as to be entered through another court, in order to avoid the restrictions of the convent itself. Here the wretched mistress of Louis XIV. came from time to time during the great festivals of the Church, when it was advisable to have the appearance of penitence; and the character

of its foundress made the convent a very suitable retreat for Madame du Deffand. It is curious how the gay Frenchwoman could without shame thus easily play the hypocrite. But in the case of Madame du Deffand, as more recently in that of Madame Récamier, who retired to a 'cell' in the same way, and made the Abbaye-aux-Bois celebrated for its society, the motive was probably to save the expense of keeping up a more worldly establishment. Not only were the apartments belonging to the convent let at a cheaper rate than more fashionable ones could have been, but the show of retirement enabled the pretended recluse to adopt a simpler *ménage*, and dispense with carriages and servants.

Here, however, according to Marmontel, the habits of this recluse were the most unnatural and self-indulgent. She passed the night in entertaining her adorers, and the whole day in bed, rising only at six in the evening to receive her guests. Afflicted with sleeplessness, she had no mercy on her humble companion, and forced her to adopt the same mode of life. Thus, after the guests were gone, and Madame du Deffand, at day-break, retired to her bed, she obliged Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, weary as she was, to read to her for hours. She appears to have treated her in everything after the same fashion, consulting only her own comfort, and indifferent to that of her companion. Certainly her treatment must have been very bad, as at last Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse swallowed sixty grains of opium, in the hope of ridding herself of a life which was made so miserable. The dose had not the desired effect, though it made her very ill. La Harpe has said of Madame du Deffand, that 'it were difficult to have less sensibility or more selfishness;' and as an instance of this, it is related that on the death of M. Pont de Veyle, who had, as we have seen, been her friend for fifty years, she went the same evening to a gay supper-party, and when asked after her friend, exclaimed, 'Alas! he died at six this evening; otherwise, you would not have seen me here.'

It is said again, that on hearing of the death of Mdlle. de l'Espinasse, she only remarked: 'She might have died fifteen years sooner, and then I should not have lost D'Alembert.'

Even Walpole, who was so devoted to her, gives, involuntarily, little hints of her jealous and spiteful character.

How great was this robbery of D'Alembert may be judged from the admiration she expresses for him in the following portrait, which was probably written before their breach of friendship :—

‘D'Alembert was born without relations, interest, or fortune, and had only the ordinary education of most children : no one took the trouble to cultivate his mind or form his character. The first thing he discovered, when he began to think for himself was, that he cared for nothing. He consoled himself for this indifference by the independence it gave him ; but as his mind developed, he found the inconvenience of this state, and looked within himself for some cure for his unhappiness. He said to himself, that he was the child of Nature, and should consult and obey none but her (to which principle he has remained true) ; that his rank, his title in the universe, was that of being a man ; that nothing was above him nor beneath him ; that there is nothing but virtue and vice, mind or stupidity, which merits our respect or contempt ; that liberty was the true fortune of the wise ; and that it could be acquired and enjoyed by any one, by avoiding the passions and every occasion which might prompt them.

‘The safest preservative against them, he believed to be study ; and the activity of his mind could not limit itself to studies of one kind ; every species of science, every branch of knowledge, occupied him by turns ; he formed his taste by classical reading, and soon found himself in a position to imitate what he read. In short, his genius developed, and he appeared before the world in the character of a prodigy. His simple manners, upright character, look of youth and frank address, united with his talents, at first astonished those who met him ; but he was not equally well judged by all. Some saw in him nothing more than an awkward youth. His simplicity and frankness struck them as mere loutishness. The only merit they discovered in him was the singular talent he has for mimicking everything he sees. This amused them, but that was all.

'Such an entrance into society was calculated to disgust him with it ; and he soon escaped from it, giving himself up more closely than ever to study and philosophy. It was then that he published his "Essai sur les Gens de Lettres," a work which had not the success that he had looked for. The nobility thought he was robbing them of their rights, by advising authors not to seek their protection ; and the authors could not applaud advice so contrary to their interests ; so that both patrons and patronized were equally opposed to him. All he had said in favour of liberty seemed to recommend licence. An equally bad interpretation was put upon his love of truth ; but his disinterestedness, the contempt he had for such criticism, the silence he kept, the prudence of his conduct, and, in a word, that real merit which sooner or later triumphs over envy, forced his enemies to do him justice or at least hold their tongues ; they dared no longer oppose the public voice.

'D'Alembert enjoys the reputation due to the highest talents, and the constant practice of the noblest virtues. Disinterestedness and truth compose his character. Generous and feeling, he has every essential quality, but has not all those required by society ; he wants that softness and amenity which give it its charm ; his heart does not seem to be very susceptible, and one is inclined to think that there is more virtue in him than feeling. He does not give one the pleasure of feeling that you are necessary to him ; he asks nothing of his friends, and prefers attending to them than being attended to. Gratitude is too much of a duty to him, and would shackle his liberty. All restraint, all annoyance of every possible kind is insupportable to him : and he has been admirably described as the *slave of liberty*.'

We have given this sketch in full as a very good specimen of Madame du Deffand's literary powers. The style of her letters is very different. The intellectual worth of Mdlle. de l'Espinasse soon became apparent to the friends of her protectress, whose house and society were not calculated in any way to improve her moral character. She was in the habit of rising an hour before Madame du Deffand, in order to prepare the rooms ; and some of the intimates of the house, discovering this, used

to arrive privately at that hour to enjoy her society without exciting the jealousy of the old lady of sixty up stairs. Among the number was the great mathematician, who, though more than fifty years of age, gradually contracted a positive passion for this young and clever person. Though she could not return, she accepted it, and even went further. In an illness with which he was prostrated, she attended him as nurse, and thus commenced a disreputable connection which afterwards became publicly known.

Meanwhile, Madame du Deffand discovered the partiality of her friends for her 'humble companion,' and was furious. Jealousy and selfishness combined were at last too much to be endured, and in a moment of indignation the young lady poured out to her protectress those feelings which her conduct had long been maturing. She then left her, took, in the Rue de Belle-Chasse, an apartment which was furnished for her by the Duchesse de Luxembourg, and, in a humbler way, set up, as it were, a rival salon to that of her late mistress. The friends of Madame du Deffand were now divided, and while some continued to frequent the convent, others flew to the Rue de Belle-Chasse. D'Alembert would have remained true to both, but Madame du Deffand imperiously told him that he must either break with Mdle. de l'Espinasse or with herself. He at once chose the latter alternative.

The rival salon succeeded admirably. Mackintosh writes 'Without rank, fortune, or even acknowledged name, she collected around her at her humble apartment the most brilliant and illustrious society of Europe. From the account of La Harpe and Marmontel, it appears that she presided in this society with equal skill and grace; that she guided conversation without appearing to do so. She moderated or increased its ardour as occasion required; Turgot and Condillac were amongst those who submitted to her guidance. Turgot admitted her to long and confidential conversations, even when he was minister. Those who knew her, considered her as an extraordinary compound of discretion and decorum, with the most excited imagination and the most fiercely burning sensibility.'

Whatever may have been her fault in this quarrel, Madame du Deffand did not behave well after it. A month later, Mdlle. de l'Espinasse wrote to her, asking for an interview, in which 'to renew, myself,' she writes, 'the assurance of a respect and attachment which will end only with my life.' To this Madame du Deffand returned a cold reply, declining to see or be reconciled to her. Nor did her jealousy abate. Ten years later, in 1675, Walpole thus writes to Conway, who was in Paris: 'There is at Paris a Mdlle. de l'Espinasse, a pretended *bel-esprit*, who was formerly a humble companion of Madame du Deffand, and betrayed her, and used her very ill. I beg of you not to let anybody carry you thither. It would disoblige my friend of all things in the world, and she would never tell you a syllable. * * * Pray do not mention it; it might look simple in me, and yet I owe it to her, as I know it would hurt her. * * * I dwell upon it, because she has some enemies so spiteful that they try to carry all English to Mdlle. de l'Espinasse.' The end of the 'humble companion' was very unsatisfactory. Her *liaison* with D'Alembert was not the only one of the kind to which she gave way. She became deeply attached to a Marquis de Mora, a young and handsome Spaniard, and for four years lived with him. His family recalled him to Spain; but the separation affected him so deeply that he became dangerously ill, and his relations consented to his returning to marry her. He did so, but before he was sufficiently recovered to travel, and died on the road. Two years later she herself died of fever at the age of forty. Mackintosh says: 'Her letters are, in my opinion, the truest picture of deep passion ever traced by a human being.'

This quarrel took place in 1764. In the autumn of the following year Horace Walpole, then a man of eight-and-forty, came to Paris. French society was at this time in the worst possible condition. Two characteristics suffice to describe it—vice and wit—with the understanding that the one was as bad as the other. The vicious were all witty, the wit as openly indelicate as the vice. Two classes of persons composed all the chief sets, courtesans and so-called philosophers. The former were the wives and daughters of the 'noblest' families

of France. A profligate king gave encouragement to a profligate court, and the chief ambition of a woman of rank and fashion was to be the mistress of the monarch. The exceptions to this rule of profligacy were so few that a virtuous woman in those days stood out as an inexplicable phenomenon. Even ugliness was no safeguard, and a *bel-esprit* was expected to be *galante*, however hideous her face might be.

The society of such women was shared chiefly by men, who called themselves philosophers, and were certainly thinkers. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, D'Alembert, Helvetius, Hume, and Wilkes were the pets of these great ladies, the constant frequenters of the *petits soupers*, at which they held revel night after night. The conversation here was of a freedom and coarseness which shocked even Walpole. Atheism was openly proclaimed, and it was considered a 'blasphemy against reason' to believe in God. '*Il est bigot, c'est un déiste,*' was said by one of these ladies of Voltaire, who was not Atheist enough for them. 'Laugh!' wrote Walpole, 'they have no time to laugh; there is God and the king to be pulled down first; and men and women, one and all, are all devoutly employed in the demolition. They think me quite profane, for having any belief left.'

The wit was in fact of a terribly serious nature. Bon-mots were the business of the day; but the bitterest, most blasphemous, and most indelicate were always the most popular; and their coiners cared rather to be admired as audacious thinkers, than to amuse the company, knowing that what they said to-night would be repeated to-morrow in a thousand letters and at a hundred supper-tables. 'The *savants*,' writes Walpole, 'I beg their pardon, the philosophers, are insupportable, superficial, overbearing, and fanatic; they preach incessantly, and their avowed doctrine is atheism.' In fact as Warburton remarks, Parisian society was a perpetual Belshazzar's feast, and one cannot wonder that thirty years later the earth should have opened beneath them all in the form of the Revolution, nor think the punishment too severe.

It was a peculiarity of the highest French society of that day, that the amusements it offered were purely intellectual. The

men and women who saw nothing disgusting in coarse wit, despised such natural enjoyments as music and dancing. The consequence was, that when they sought to vary the conversation which was the staple object of their meeting, they became either tedious or ridiculous. On the one hand they read out epigrams, or prose characters such as those of which we have given specimens, or even recited verses in that fierce French bombast, which is only tolerable when refined by the talent or heightened by the power of a Rachel; on the other they got up childish little scenes, of the character of which an idea may be gathered from an amusing anecdote of David Hume, at a time when he was quite the pet of the fair Parisians. On one occasion he was to represent an eastern sultan, who was to beguile two lovely captives, seated on either side of him on the sofa. We can imagine the historian's unwieldy form in oriental costume; and the contrast formed by the two beautiful Aspasia's, who were waiting to be fascinated. But David had no idea of the character—more praise to him—and thumping his knees, he could only look from one to the other, exclaiming, 'Eh bien! mes demoiselles; eh bien! vous voilà donc; eh bien! vous voilà, vous voilà ici.' It is scarcely necessary to add that the author of the Essay on Human Nature was deposed, and a more gallant monarch raised in his place.

Such was the character of this society of pseudo-philosophers and honourless women. The salons, which were generally open on specified days, twice a week, sometimes oftener, and especially on Sundays, and where conversation (*i. e.* satirical gossip), cards, and supper were the bill of fare, were very numerous. At this period, however, there were two great rival centres, the salon of Madame de Geoffrin and that of Madame du Deffand. Both were thronged with wits, Aspasia's of the highest rank, and so-called philosophers. There was, however, some difference between them. After the desertion by D'Alembert Madame du Deffand affected to despise all philosophers, and accordingly lost some of them. She also detested professional literary men, and her salon never admitted that much-maligned class. Birth, or the pretension to it, was the great ticket to her favour; but, again, her society was too *spirituel* to admit those

who had nothing more than birth to recommend them. These restrictions sufficed to weed her company pretty well. The great families of France contributed their quota, the De Choiseuls, for instance, were among her most intimate friends, as, also, the Maréchale de Luxembourg. Vice was plenteously represented: there were Madame de Mirepoix, who, besides other vices, loved gambling to excess; Madame de Boufflers, who will be remembered in connection with Samuel Johnson; Madame de Rochfort, a *savante*, Madame de Forcalquier and Madame de Talmond, all ladies of the tightest prejudices and loosest morals, and all of the high aristocracy of France. The last mentioned was said to have been the mistress of Charles Edward Stuart, commonly called 'the Young Pretender.' She had been, as Walpole says, religious to please the queen, and *galante* (*i. e.* wicked) to please herself; and she wore on one arm a bracelet with a portrait of Charles Edward, on the other one with a picture of our Lord. When asked what connection there was between them, she replied with the then much admired blasphemy, 'Because their kingdoms are not of this world.'

Into these sets Walpole was introduced by his English friends, and his name, as the son of an English minister, backed the introductions. Lady Hervey gave him several, and George Selwyn, a great favourite in Paris, presented him to Madame du Deffand. Her appearance must certainly have been disappointing to him. She was found in a moderate-sized room with no great attractions, save a few portraits of celebrated beauties, the arms of Madame de Montespan behind the grate, and some other associations interesting to a dilettante antiquarian, like Walpole. In this room, furnished with more comfort than elegance, the 'old blind woman' sat in a huge chair, which resembled more than aught else I can remember the seats of the porters of our Inns of Court or Oxford colleges, very high, very deep, round-backed, low in the seat, and more like a coffin set on end than an easy chair. Grimm likens it to the tub of Diogenes.

Blind, rather feeble, with her head wrapped in a hood, her old face **still** delicate and remarkable for its look of cleanliness,



WALPOLE'S INTRODUCTION TO MADAME DU DEFFAND.

[illegible]

she received her new guest. He saw nothing in her, at first, but a merry old woman who said smart things which were repeated wherever he went, and who was much the fashion. As his French was by no means perfect in conversation—even in writing, though generally idiomatic, it is often faulty—and as he confesses that he could not find words enough to join the rapid, noisy gossip of the gay Parisians, it is probable that at first Madame du Deffand cared but little for this new *Anglais*. It was true he bore a celebrated name, was well introduced, and of excellent and easy carriage; and the little he may have said was, we may be sure, of the true Walpolian sort, though in French, displaying the two qualities she could best appreciate—slight satire and complete knowledge of the world. But Walpole was not as yet the fashion.

A clever but unkind squib supplied this one want. Rousseau was at that time a really injured man. The parliament had issued an *arrêt* against him on account of his opinions, and he had been forced to fly to England, where Hume was befriending him. He was therefore in some sense 'down;' it was mean in Walpole to kick him. Rousseau's wretched morbid character was as well known to the lord of Strawberry Hill as to every one else. It was known that ridicule was that which he dreaded most in the world, though his conduct throughout was that of a madman. Still, under the circumstances, Walpole might have spared a man who had never thwarted him in any way, and who was at this moment in exile. But Horace could not deny himself the enjoyment of being admired for his wit. He wrote, in capital French, a letter purporting to come from Frederick the Great, offering the Hermit of Montmorency a retreat in his kingdom. This epistle was couched in language which might possibly have been serious, but could easily be detected as satirical. It touched the tenderest points of the philosopher's character, his morbid folly, his perpetual suspicion of real or fancied enemies, his love of appearing in the character of a persecuted man; but all with such delicacy, that it might possibly have been written by the monarch with whose name it was signed, and did indeed mystify the public. Thus with an air of frankness the writer, after expressing his admira-

tion for the philosopher, exclaims: 'Show your enemies that you can sometimes be sensible; it will annoy them, and do you no harm. * * * If you persist in racking your brain to discover new misfortunes, choose which you will. I am a king, and can get you as many as you like. * * * And I will leave off persecuting you when you cease to make a glory of being persecuted.'

The squib succeeded. It was the amusement first of the salons and then of the newspapers. Widely circulated through France, and causing no little astonishment, it soon crossed the Channel, and appeared in the English journals. Rousseau, infuriated at this new stab, wrote a bitter letter to the editor of the 'London Chronicle,' to which Walpole, flushed with success, prepared a yet more cutting answer with the signature of 'Emile;' but this time his better nature prevailed. He felt, as he wrote to Madame du Deffand, that it was not well to torment a man who had done him no injury, and the fun had gone far enough. At any rate the *jeu d'esprit* procured him the admiration of all Voltaire's set, and indeed of most of the wits of Paris; and he was soon installed in a seat of honour at most of the supper-tables of that city. At first he wrote of Madame du Deffand in any but a flattering strain; was disgusted with her coarseness, of which he gives quite unrepeatable specimens, and even talks of her company as 'dull.' But his tone soon changes, and he had not been in Paris four months before he wrote of her in the following strain to his friend Gray:—

'She is now very old, and stone blind, but retains all her vivacity, wit, memory, judgment, passions, and agreeableness. She goes to operas, plays, suppers, and Versailles; gives suppers twice a week; has everything new read to her; makes new songs and epigrams, ay, admirably, and remembers every one that has been made these fourscore years. She corresponds with Voltaire, dictates charming letters to him, contradicts him, and is no bigot to him or anybody, and laughs both at the clergy and the philosophers. In a dispute, into which she easily falls, she is very warm, and yet scarce ever in the wrong: her judgment on every subject is as just as possible; on every point of conduct as wrong as possible; for she

is all love and hatred, passionate for her friends to enthusiasm, still anxious to be loved—I don't mean by lovers—and a vehement enemy, but openly. As she can have no amusement but conversation, the least solitude and *ennui* are insupportable to her, and put her into the power of several worthless people, who eat her suppers when they can eat nobody's of higher rank, wink to one another, and laugh at her.'

What an unloveable picture, in spite of Walpole's partiality ! How unsympathetic this woman, who lived only for society, gave up religion and the hope of heaven for it, and was laughed at by it in her blindness ! Walpole's nature had little sympathy in it. He never loved, but he defended eagerly those whom he liked, as he cruelly aspersed those whom he did not. At this time he is full warm in defence of the blind old woman ; but in after-years he himself was one of those who treated her rudely, and that *because she was in love with him !*

A little later he writes : ' Their barbarity and injustice to our good old friend is indescribable. One of the worst is just dead, Madame de Lambert ; I am sure you will not regret her. * * * They eat her suppers when they cannot go to a more fashionable house, laugh at her, abuse her, nay, try to raise her enemies among her nominal friends.'

On a later visit to Paris he writes of her : ' Having lived from the most agreeable to the most reasoning age, she has all that is amiable in the last, all that is sensible in this, without the vanity of the former or the pedant impertinence of the latter. * * * Affectionate as Madame de Sévigné, she has none of her prejudices, but a more universal taste ; and with the most delicate frame, her spirits hurry her through a life of fatigue that would kill me if I was to continue here. If we return by one in the morning from suppers in the country, she proposes driving to the Boulevard, or to the Foire St. Ovide, because it is too early to go to bed.'

It is just to Walpole to say that though he scolded, warned, lectured, and even annoyed this old friend to herself, he never wrote of her to others in any but an affectionate manner. The fact is, that no man was more susceptible to ridicule than that arch-ridiculer, Horace Walpole. And the matter really became

ridiculous. He was in Paris some seven months, and perpetually at Madame du Deffand's. If his account of her so-called friends' treatment of her be true, perhaps his kindness may have affected her. Perhaps his wit, as she found it out in spite of his bad French ; perhaps, and still more probably, the similarity of their characters and opinions, their common scepticism (though Walpole was more of a sceptic about mankind than about God), their common love of a sneer, and much more that they had in common, may have made Madame du Deffand feel doubly attached to this clever, agreeable man. It was a point of her character—and she is constantly declaring it—that she needed some one to love, and be loved by. It is true she could not love easily. She had passed too selfish, too evil a life to love at all in reality. It was only in her old age that she felt the utter loneliness of her life. She had no religion to console her ; no next world to look forward to : she lived for this only, she found it barren, and, true woman that she was, she knew that nothing but love could fertilize it. The old President was nothing to her by this time. She tyrannized over him too much to love him, and he was really too old for it. Under all these considerations, she tried to fall in love with Horace Walpole. She was bordering upon seventy, he only fifty. Could anything be more ridiculous ? It is true it was only friendship that she offered him, but a friendship of that enthusiastic kind that is quite equivalent to a passion. He had scarcely left Paris when she wrote him her first letter ; but in the next we find that Walpole has already been chiding her, and complained of her *indiscrétions* and *emportemens romanesques*. He had, in fact, already suffered from her ridiculous attachment to him. A man must always feel that an attachment in a woman twenty years older than himself partakes of the absurd ; but when that woman is seventy years of age, blind, and infirm, the absurdity becomes almost painful.

Her letters to Walpole are fitter for a girl of nineteen than a woman of seventy. She talks about being the Héloïse to his Abélard, the Philothée to his St. François de Sales ; she submits herself to him as to her master ; she tells him freely that she loves him, that she is wretched without him, and so forth ;

and this strain continues through a correspondence of fifteen years, and no fewer than 348 letters; so that, deducting Walpole's subsequent visits to Paris, she must have written to him about once a week during that period.

Walpole had not covenanted for this. He had a certain affection, which he occasionally betrays very strongly for his 'blind old woman,' or, as he calls her sometimes, his 'old fairy.' Her enthusiasm shocked the son of the daughter of a lord mayor of London. Walpole, who has often been described as 'more than half French,' was, in fact, more than wholly English. No one can read his foreign letters without seeing this. He had every English prejudice about the Continent: he gave in, with his usual tact, to continental manners, and assimilated with them certainly better than Hume, for Walpole was a man of the world, and not a philosopher; but when once at home in his dear Strawberry, he finds French humbug flat and stale, and is almost John-Bullish at times in his abuse of it.

He conceived an idea that his letters would be read at the post-office, and the ridicule of a love affair—for so it was, on her part—between an old woman of more than seventy and a man of more than fifty exposed to his disadvantage. He therefore continually strove to check her enthusiasm for himself, and was often even rude in his attempts to do so. She was certainly extravagant. She not only wrote in terms of the most vehement affection, and even became jealous of poor Madame de Sévigné, long since in her coffin, but always admired by Walpole as the first of letter-writers. In such a mood she sent him a snuff-box, in which was a portrait of Madame de Sévigné, and within it placed a letter, referred to in that lady's life, and purporting to come from the ghost of Madame de Sévigné herself. This was only one of her pleasantries, in her attempt to make Walpole really as affectionate to her as she was to him.

Less than ten years after the commencement of their friendship, when Madame du Deffand was nearly eighty years old, and reasonable expectations of her death might be entertained, Walpole grew amusingly nervous about his letters, which he thought might possibly be published with others by her executors. He therefore commissioned his great friend, General Conway,

who was then in Paris, to obtain them from Madame du Deffand. He writes (1774): 'Madame du Deffand has kept a great many of my letters, and as she is very old, I am pained about them. I have written to her to beg she will deliver them up to you, to bring back to me, and I trust she will. If she does, be so good as to take great care of them. If she does not mention them, tell her, just before you come away, that I begged you to bring them; and if she hesitates, convince her how it would hurt me, to have letters written in bad French, mentioning several people both French and English, fall into bad hands, and, perhaps, be printed.'

It was clearly not the bad French, so much as the ridiculous sentimentality, of which the lord of Strawberry was afraid. She returned the letters, however, very reluctantly, and thus wrote to him on the subject: 'You will have material for lighting your fire for a long time, especially if you add my letters to yours; and nothing could be more just. But I trust to your prudence, and will not follow the example of distrust which you set me.' But he seems to have left her little peace. 'Ha, ha!' she writes to him, 'I disturb your gaiety, and you fear my letters like actual poison. * * * In the name of Heaven do not scold me, * * * bear with my melancholy nature, and the dull passages you find in my letters. I will take care to admit fewer into them. Your severity makes me tremble. Be reassured as to my discretion, and be certain that my acts will always be conformed to your wishes.'

Poor old woman! It was certainly a hard fate, that in this latest of her love affairs, and this too, the first pure one, she should have been despised. Walpole might surely have shown the compassion which he claimed so eagerly for her at their early acquaintance.

In 1769 he again visited Paris, again in 1771, and lastly in 1775. On each occasion the old lady flew to meet him. As a specimen of her want of delicacy, and his too, we may quote his account of her visit on the last occasion. 'Madame du Deffand came to me the instant I arrived, and sat by me whilst I stripped and dressed myself; for, as she said, since she cannot see, there was no harm in my being stark.' She supplied him with ample amusement. Some time after, he writes

to Conway : ‘Madame du Deffand has pinned her (Madame de Jonsac) down to meeting me at her house four times before next Tuesday, all parentheses, that are not to interfere with our suppers ; and from those suppers I never get to bed before two or three o’clock. In short, I need have the activity of a squirrel, and the strength of a Hercules, to go through my labours, not to count how many *démêlés* I have to *raccommoder*, and how many *mémoires* to present against Tonton (Madame du Deffand’s favourite dog), who grows the greater favourite, the more people he devours. * * * T’other night he flew at Lady Barrymore’s face * * * she was terrified ; she fell into tears. Madame du Deffand, perceiving she had not beaten Tonton half enough, immediately told us a story of a lady, whose dog, having bitten a piece out of a gentleman’s leg, the tender dame, in a great fright, cried out, “Won’t it make my dog sick?”’

After her death, Walpole ‘adopted’ this detestable cur, to succeed his late pet, Rosette. He asked for it on the plea that it was ‘so cross, that nobody else would treat it well.’ It arrived at Strawberry, was duly installed, and became a great object of attention to his flatterers. ‘I was going to say, it is incredible how fond I am of it, but I have no occasion to brag of any dogmanity. I dined at Richmond House t’other day, and mentioning whither I was going, the duke said, “Own the truth ; shall you not call at home first, and see Tonton?” He guessed rightly ; he is now sitting on my paper as I write—not the duke, but Tonton.’ He speaks of Rosette, as ‘his poor late favourite.’ Poor old bachelor ! how like are the old bachelor’s to the old maid’s habits !

To return to Madame du Deffand : her life continued in the same monotonous round of suppers, operas, visits, and gossip. Its main interest was to write to, and receive letters from, her latest lover—Horace Walpole. But the spirit of weariness, the consciousness of the absence of affection, the desire to be loved, preyed upon her daily, and her spirits grew more and more depressed. In such a state of mind she resolved, in 1767, to supply the vacancy caused by Mdlle. de l’Espinasse’s departure, and engaged as a companion a Mdlle. Sanadon. She was the niece of Père Sanadon, well known for his translation

of Horace. She was a much safer person than her predecessor, with none of her talents or liveliness, but much more ready to endure her mistress's ill-humours. Then, too, there was not the same room for jealousy now, for there was no one but Walpole left to be jealous of, and he was in England. The President was still alive and faithful, but he was her slave and more than eighty. Pont de Veyle was always there, but to him she was indifferent. At seventy years old, too, Madame du Deffand could surely give up being jealous. The fact was, that the fashion of her salon was already giving way to those of younger and less peevish beauties. A certain number of old friends, male and female, remained true to her to the last, and their coterie, though still renowned for wit, had not life enough in it to tempt others to join it. Madame du Deffand did not take much part in politics; she had driven away the philosophers; her main interest was in the gossip of the city, and especially all that related to her own set. Her chief attraction was her wit, which never seemed to flag. Specimens of her bon-mots are scattered through Walpole's letters, and the notices of her life; but a few will be sufficient.

Thus one of her mots was long attributed to Voltaire, namely, that Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* was nothing after all but 'de l'*Esprit** *sur les lois*.'

Again, when some very credulous ecclesiastic was relating to her the legend of St. Denis, whose head was cut off at St. Ouen, near Paris, and who thereupon was weak (or strong) enough to walk with it under his arm all the way to the suburb named after him, and explain the various places at which he stopped to rest, assured her that the first stage had been the most trying; 'Ah,' cried Madame du Deffand with a look of perfect sincerity, 'I can well believe that, for in affairs of that kind, *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*,' which has since become a proverb.

Voltaire has preserved a maxim of hers, 'Things which cannot be known to us are not necessary to us,'—a consoling thought for Atheists and Materialists.

On the death of Voltaire, everybody that could write verses—and everybody did write them in those days—sang his praises

* *Esprit* meaning both 'spirit' and 'wit.'

in those wretched couplets. 'Voltaire suffered the common lot of mortals,' said Madame du Deffand, 'd'être après leur mort la pâture des vers.'

But far better wit than this, in the more solid form of worldly wisdom, is to be found in her letters: yet it must not be supposed that they are of a very high standard. They are clever, amusing, satirical; that is, when they are not mournful, peevish, and ridiculous. But they are the letters of an *ennuyée*; of a woman, who, being sick of life, had no religion to reconcile her to it; who, dreading death, had not patience to wait for it. Madame de Sévigné and Madame du Deffand are constantly quoted as the two great letter-writers of France. How infinitely superior is the one to the other! What freshness, what cheerfulness, what nature in the Saint de Livry, as Walpole called her; what whining misery, what cheerless grumbling in '*ma petite!*' Yet both had their trials. It was a far harder trial to the tender heart of Madame de Sévigné to be separated from the daughter she loved more than all the world, than to Madame du Deffand to lose her eyes, a deprivation which made so little difference in her daily life. The secret is as simple as a child's face. The one had a good conscience and belief in a future world; the other just the reverse. Madame de Sévigné was no bigot, no superstitious Romanist, but she had a fund of belief which sufficed to accept revelation, while it rejected fanaticism. Madame du Deffand was not an avowed atheist, but she was practically a sceptic. She had no power of believing; she only lived for this world, and could not even endure the thought of another. Once or twice she made an attempt to turn *dévoté*, according to the fashion of her younger days. But religion in any form was distasteful to her. She could bear to be told of her sins against society, and Walpole's *gronderies* were endured; but she could not bear to be told of her sins against God. 'Ask me no questions and preach me no sermons,' was the stipulation she made with the confessor, whom she engaged at one time to make her a Christian. Blindness, loss of friends, sleepless days and nights, abject misery could not humble her. She believed only in the world, and to her dying day lived in and for it. Let the cheerfulness of the one,

and the wretchedness of the other, be a warning to those who would love the world too well. Madame du Deffand in her old age, though still surrounded by friends, though comfortable in her means, though admired and flattered for her wit, though, even at eighty, sought as a potentate of society, was, to judge from her letters, one of the most miserable women ever born. Let her life be a warning.

There was no striking event in the latter days of Madame du Deffand. Her friendships and their changes were all that made up the sum of her existence. Among the friends of her long old age, the least objectionable and most agreeable was the Duchesse de Choiseul, whom Walpole declared to be his latest and strongest passion. Carmontel, a better dramatist (we hope) than artist, drew a well-known picture of Madame du Deffand receiving a doll from Madame de Choiseul. As we have stated, the latter was always called by the affectionate name of *grandmaman*, though much younger than Madame du Deffand. In this picture the *grandmaman* is far from lovely, yet she had the reputation of beauty; and Walpole, who, on receiving the picture, admired the excellence of Madame du Deffand's likeness, indignantly exclaims against that of the duchess. 'I should never have guessed it,' he writes; 'it is a most common face; none of the pretty delicacy of this *esprit personifié*, of this wickedness without malice or affectation; none of that beauty which seems to be an emanation of the soul, which shows itself in the face for fear it should excite awe rather than love. Enfin, Enfin, I don't like it.'

Still we may judge from this, that Madame de Choiseul had a clever and sparkling rather than beautiful face. She was the wife of the one-time prime minister, afterwards disgraced, who, in his will, desired to be buried in the same grave with her, which does not agree with the account of his indifference, given by Walpole in the following agreeable sketch, when he sent Gray a series of portraits of the reigning beauties of Paris:—

'The Duchess of Choiseul, the only young one of these heroines, is not very pretty, but has fine eyes, and is a little model in wax-work, which not being allowed to speak for some time as incapable, has a hesitation and modesty, the latter of which

the court has not cured, and the former of which is atoned for by the most interesting sound of voice, and forgotten in the most elegant turn and propriety of expression. Oh ! it is the gentlest, most amiable, civil little creature that ever came out of a fairy egg ! So just in its phrases and thoughts, so attentive and good-natured. Everybody loves it but its husband, who prefers his own sister the Duchesse de Grammont, an Amazonian, fierce, haughty dame, who loves and hates arbitrarily, and is detested. Madame de Choiseul, passionately fond of her husband, was the martyr of this union, but at last submitted with a good grace ; has gained a good credit with him, and is still believed to idolize him. But I doubt it : she takes too much pains to profess it.'

True sceptic—Horace ! But Madame de Choiseul is a rare and charming exception to the general rule of Frenchwomen of the day, in the mere fact of having *ever* been in love with her husband.

The loss of the President Hénault took place in November, 1770, when he was eighty-six years old. After being her devoted servant for some thirty or forty years, during which he lived near her alternately as husband, friend, and slave, it is thus that Madame du Deffand writes of his death : 'The President died yesterday at seven in the morning. * * Madame de Jonsac (his sister) seemed extremely afflicted ; my grief is more moderate : I had so many proofs of his small amount of friendship, that I fancy I have only lost an acquaintance.' This is the woman whose good heart Walpole praises !

Her life was henceforward a mixture of selfishness, worldliness, and remorse without repentance. In 1775, when Walpole was in Paris, she was seized with a violent illness. 'Madame du Deffand,' he writes, 'has been so ill, that the day she was seized, I thought she would not live the night. * * * She cannot lift her head from the pillow without *étourdissements* ; and yet her spirits gallop faster than anybody's, and so do her repartees. She has a great supper to-night for the Duc de Choiseul, and was in such a passion yesterday with her cook about it, and that put Tonton (her dog) into such a rage, that *nos dames de St. Joseph* thought the devil or the philosophers

were flying away with their convent. The next day she received a large party, among whom were all the heads of the great French families.' At eighty-four, he tells us, she had 'all the impetuosity that *was* the character of the French.'

At last, in the midst of society, good and bad, the day came when she was to deliver up her soul to her Maker. We would fain not be hard upon a mortal, especially on a woman, and that one dead; but we cannot read the last letters of this woman, and the accounts of her last hours, and convince ourselves that she felt the slightest penitence for her life of sin, and it may even be doubted if she died a believer. In 1780, she had reached the great age of eighty-three. She had been given this length of days, that in age, at least, she might repent. She had received repeated warnings since the time that she lost her eyesight. She had been made to feel the wretchedness of life within herself; yet while she looked calmly upon death, she viewed it only as a necessary evil, not as the beginning of a great and awful eternity.

On the 22nd of August she began to feel her end approaching, and thus wrote to Walpole:—

'I told you in my last that I was not well; it is worse to-day. I feel great weakness and depression: my voice is gone; I cannot stand; I can scarcely move; my heart is clogged; I can scarcely think that this state does not announce my end as near. I have no strength to be frightened at it; and since I could not see you again in life, I have nothing to regret. Amuse yourself, my friend, as well as you can, and do not be afflicted by my state; we were almost lost to one another, and could never see one another again; you will regret me, because it is pleasant to feel that one is loved.' Her rooms were still crowded with her old friends, to whom she managed to talk till within eight days of her death. Walpole writes: 'So I reckon myself dead to France, where I have kept up no other connection.' He does not seem more deeply affected than this. On hearing of her death, he says: 'I have heard from Paris of the death of my dear old friend, Madame du Deffand, whom I went thither so often to see. It was not quite unexpected, and was softened by her great age—eighty-four, which forbade distant

hopes ; and by what I dreaded more than her death, her increasing deafness, which, had it become, like her blindness, total, would have been living after death. Her memory only *began* to impair ; her amazing sense and quickness, not at all. I have written to her once a week for these last fifteen years, as correspondence and conversation could be her only pleasure.'

The Baron de Grimm thus describes her last days : ' Her best friends, Madame de Luxembourg, Madame de Choiseul, and Madame de Cambise, scarcely ever quitted her during her last illness : in the excess of their attachment they never ceased playing at *loto* every evening in her chamber till she had breathed her last sigh. *She never would hear either of confession or receiving the sacrament.* All that the minister of the parish, who visited her in virtue of his office, could obtain, after the most earnest exhortations, was, that she should confess herself to her friend, the Duc de Choiseul. It cannot be doubted that a confessor, so judiciously chosen, granted her, with the best grace possible, absolution for all her sins, without excepting even an epigram she once made upon himself.'

Her faithful servant and secretary, Wiart, wrote to Walpole on her death : ' I cannot tell you the pain I felt in writing that letter (the last to Horace) at her dictation. I could not finish reading it over to her ; my words were choked with sobs. She said to me, "*Then you love me !*" * * * Her death is in the course of nature. She has had no illness, or at least no suffering. When I heard her complaining, I asked her if she felt pain anywhere : she always answered, No. The last eight days of her life were a complete lethargy ; she had lost all feeling ; her death was very easy, although the illness was a long one. * * * She has ordered by her will a most simple burial. Her directions have been executed. She wished to be laid in her parish church, St. Sulpice. The parish would not allow her to be decorated after death with any marks of distinction : these gentlemen were not perfectly satisfied about her. Yet the rector saw her every day, and even began to confess her, but could not proceed, because her head was confused, and she could not receive the sacrament ; but M. le Curé behaved excellently.

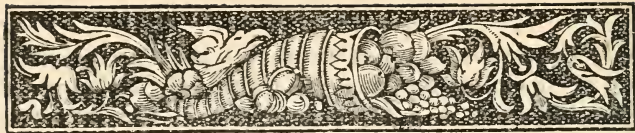
thinking that her end was not so near. I shall keep Tonton (the dog) till the departure of Mr. Thomas Walpole, and take the greatest care of him. He is very good, and bites nobody. He was only naughty when with his mistress. I well remember, sir, that she begged you to take care of it.'

That remark of hers, 'Then you love me,' is touching. This woman had all her life longed to be loved. She had always taken the wrong means to gain this object. Even Walpole, decidedly the most attached of her friends, did not love her enough to put up with her enthusiastic affection. It is a token, too, of that scepticism which made her life so miserable. She never believed in the affection of others. The proof in this case was too strong to doubt. Yet Wiart had been a long time her amanuensis, and must have shown his devotion in his careful attendance on her old age. She would have been happier if she had believed in his affection before. She would have been happier all her life if she had believed anything.

To Wiart she left about a thousand pounds, and an annuity of fifty pounds per annum. Walpole says that she wished to leave to himself her little all, but he protested that if she did so he would never set foot in France again. He consented to receive only a gold box, with a portrait of her dog, and her collection of papers, chiefly letters. Those addressed to Walpole were published in 1810, with a selection of her letters to Voltaire. In the same year appeared a French edition of various letters to D'Alembert, Montesquieu, Hénault, and many other persons of great distinction in their day. Next to Walpole, Voltaire was her chief correspondent. Her letters, and the 'Portraits' of her friends, show in the most undeniable manner that she was a woman of high intellectual powers, though of poor education. She treats at times of the highest subjects with as much ease as of the gossip and scandal, in which, unfortunately, she seems to have taken greater pleasure. She is an instance of a mind spoiled by the character that accompanied it in the same individual. Able to grasp higher things, she never soars, because she never wished to. Her reflections, though often just and oftener original, are all from a worldly point of view, and leave us, as they left her, sick of a

world where all *appears* (namely, in that point of view) so hollow, so rotten, so unworthy of belief. Thank heaven, the world, bad as it is, is not quite so bad as that ; and thank heaven, too, that women who are as bad and as sceptical as Madame du Deffand—and there may be thousands—have not oftener the opportunity of writing to celebrated men letters which are afterwards published. As presenting a view of French society of the day—and most unsatisfactory society it was—her letters have the same value, if not the same interest, as those of Madame de Sévigné.





MRS. ELIZABETH MONTAGU.

Her Splenetic Father.—Elizabeth Robinson.—The Speaker.—Country Gaieties.—The Duchess of Portland.—A Lively Girl.—Gold Setting.—The Old Farm House.—Ideal and Real.—Mr. Montagu—Young Fidget.—Description of Mrs. Montagu.—Sir Joshua's Tea-kettle.—The Blue Stockings.—Garrick's Portrait.—At Montagu House.—Lady Townshend.—'Very Mixed.'—A Real Ghost Story.—Beattie.—The Worthy Schoolmaster.—Friendship.—Mrs. Montagu and the Haymakers.—'At Her, Burney!'—Mrs. Montagu in Old Age.—The Dress of the Last Century.—Decline of the Blues.—Literary Society of the Metropolis.—A Good Woman.

SIR NATHANIEL WRAXALL, in his 'Diary,' speaks of Mrs. Montagu's 'palace, as it would be termed at Rome or Naples, in Portman Square.' 'The palace' exists: we see it, somewhat secluded from public gaze, yet *not* secluded as in the time of its first owner, when it was encompassed with fields. In spring the earliest budding trees shade its entrance; in autumn the planes and elms near it are the first to shed their leaves. Compared with modern edifices Montagu House is not even stately: it is, at all events, only so because it stands apart; but it has the dignity of tradition. Within those walls, now blackened by London smoke, lived as benevolent a being as ever was intrusted by Providence with a noble fortune. Until lately, the chimney-sweepers, commemorating her consideration for their despised condition, danced every May-day before the door whence she was wont to issue—a grotesque tribute to the kindness that has been exalted into a still higher attribute in the world of spirits. The drawing-rooms in which she assembled the society which was first there called the 'Blue Stockings' are still inhabited by her descendants. Montagu House is one of the landmarks of modern society: let us hope that it will not be swept away, but will last, with her memory who built it, to our children's children.

Favoured by nature and fortune, Elizabeth Montagu had the advantage of being one of a large family. Her father, Matthew Robinson, a large landed proprietor in Yorkshire, in Cambridgeshire, and in Kent, had by his wife, Elizabeth, the daughter and heiress of Robert Drake, twelve children. How low down in the scale Elizabeth came, her nephew and biographer, who seems anxious to say as little about her as he can, does not inform us. She was, however, descended on her father's side from the Robinsons of Rokeby, who were ennobled in the reign of George II. by the Irish peerage of Rokeby of Armagh.

Elizabeth was born at York on the 2nd of October, 1720. Her father, who was a man of considerable acquirements and devoted to society, had made the mistake of marrying at eighteen, and deemed it, therefore, prudent to live chiefly in the country, though pining for the delights of the town. He revenged himself on fortune, nevertheless, and punished his large family for coming into the world by dozens, by giving himself up to occasional fits of the spleen, to which indulgence he naturally considered himself entitled. He was very witty and sarcastic, and soon perceived that his daughter Elizabeth resembled him in those respects: and, as she grew up, their encounters were oftentimes somewhat sharp.

Mr. Robinson was fond of the arts; and, among the other avocations with which he sought to solace a country life, he undertook to teach his little Elizabeth drawing. But even here her merry spirit broke bounds. 'If you design to make any proficiency in that art,' she wrote to her friend the Duchess of Portland, 'I would advise you not to draw old men's heads. It was the rueful countenance of Socrates or Seneca that first put me out of conceit with it. Had my papa given me the blooming faces of Adonis and Narcissus I might have been a more apt scholar; and when I told him I found those great beards difficult to draw, he gave me St. John's head in a charger; so, to avoid the speculation of dismal faces, which by my art I dismalled ten times more than they were before, I threw away my pencil.' Her success did not, indeed, seem to promise well. 'I have heard,' she adds, 'of some who have been famous landscape painters; of others who have been

famous battle painters ; but I take myself to have been the best hospital painter, for I never drew a figure that was not lame or blind, and they had all something of the horrible in their countenances ; and by the arching of their eyebrows and the opening of their mouths they looked so frightened you would have thought they had seen their own faces in the glass.'

When she was seven years old a circumstance occurred which gave an impetus to the direction of Elizabeth Robinson's tastes and studies. Her uncle dying, her mother inherited an estate at Coveney in Cambridgeshire, and of course some months of every year were henceforth passed at that property. Hitherto Mr. Robinson had spent his winters in York, as it was then customary to make the county town a residence for the country families. In the summer he had removed to West Layton in the same county, and to Edgeley in Wensleydale. But he now frequently lived at Coveney, near the University of Cambridge, in which he had been a gentleman commoner.

He thus introduced his family into the very heart of all that was witty and talented : more especially as Mrs. Drake, his wife's mother, had for her second husband selected Dr. Conyers Middleton, the author of the 'Life of Cicero.' Dr. Middleton perceived at once the acuteness of Elizabeth Robinson's understanding and the sensibility which softened her stronger qualities. Elizabeth was the darling of the University ; she was surpassingly beautiful as well as intelligent. Like Madame de Staël, before she was eight years old she had listened with interest to the conversations of the learned : all that was said sank deeply into her memory.

Dr. Middleton watched her with delight. He insisted on her repeating to him all she heard ; he allowed her age to be no excuse ; and she owned, in after life, that she had derived great benefit from the habit of attention thus inculcated. At the same time was engendered a value for learning and for the learned. Whilst her letters were full of all the gaiety of a girl, they diverged at times into reflections scarcely to be expected in so young, so flattered, so fashionable a belle. Her studies were Cicero, Plutarch's 'Lives,' Cornelius Nepos, Pliny. Neither she nor her friend the Duchess of Portland appeared to think

that there was anything inconsistent with the character of a fine lady in being well read : in reflecting seriously and even deeply in not looking upon this life as one of all pleasure. Her brothers were also devoted to literary pursuits, and became in early life distinguished scholars. So frequent were the arguments in the domestic circles, and so resolute the endeavour to outshine each other, that Mrs. Robinson, gentle and judicious, was often obliged to interpose ; hence the bright party around her gave her the name of the 'Speaker,' and, it may be supposed, bowed to her remonstrances.

Notwithstanding the sensation which the little Elizabeth (afterwards the celebrated Mrs. E. Montagu) produced at Cambridge, she found it 'the dullest place, affording neither anything entertaining or ridiculous enough to put into a letter.' The love of society dawned in her at a very early period of her life, and this she inherited from her father.

'Though tired of the country, I am not,' she wrote when twelve years old, 'to my great satisfaction, half so much so as my papa ; he is a little vapoured ; and last night, after two hours' silence, he broke into a great exclamation against the country, and concluded with saying, that living in the country was sleeping with one's eyes open : if he sleeps all day, I am sure he dreams very much of London.'

Poor Mr. Robinson became, in spite of 'saffron in his tea,' irretrievably afflicted with the spleen ; some provincial gaieties varied, indeed, his existence and that of his gay young daughters ; but this was only when they were passing the winter, as sometimes happened, in the less wild regions of Kent instead of Yorkshire. Then for their delight an assembly was set on foot eight miles from Mount Morris. Ten coaches honoured the great occasion, and a full moon illumined it : but company was wanting, so the Lady Paramount called in all the parsons, apprentices, tradesmen, apothecaries and farmers, milliners and haberdashers of small wares, to make up the ball. 'Here,' wrote Elizabeth, in all the impertinence of thirteen, 'sails a reverend parson ; there skips an airy apprentice ; here jumps a farmer ; and then every one has an eye to their trade : the milliner pulls you by the hand till she tears your glove ; the

mantua-maker treads on your petticoat until she unrips the seams ; the shoemaker makes you foot it till you wear out your shoes ; the mercer dirties your gown ; the apothecary opens the window behind you that you may be sick ; and the parson calls out for "Joan Saunderson."

Mr. Robinson, it appeared, enjoyed on this occasion what we should in all our finery now call 'a very mixed assembly,' with all the spirits of a newly-awakened man ; forgot his twenty years of wedlock and his nice children, and 'danced as nimbly as any of the quorum.' Now and then he was mortified by hearing the ladies cry, 'Old Mr. Robinson ! change sides and turn your daughter.' Other ladies who wished to appear young, exclaim, 'Well, there is poor grandpapa, he could no more dance so !' Then an old bachelor of fifty shakes him by the hand and cries, 'Why, you dance like one of us young fellows !' Another, by way of compliment, adds, 'Who would think you had six fine children taller than yourself ?' 'I protest if I did not know you I should take you to be young,' simpers the most antiquated virgin in the company ; 'Mr. Robinson, wears mighty well : my mother says he looks as well as ever she remembers him. He used to come often to the house when I was a girl.' How little is the world changed since then ! Mr. Robinson, his saucy daughter observed, had not the 'hyp' in this company ; 'but indeed,' she says, 'it is a distemper so well bred as never to come but when people are at home and at leisure.'

Whilst thus growing up, Elizabeth formed an acquaintance which, like most of those made in early youth, greatly influenced her tastes if not her destiny. This friend was Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, the only daughter of Edward Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, by his wife Lady Henrietta Cavendish, daughter and heiress of John Holles Duke of Newcastle. Lady Margaret, when first the juvenile friendship was formed with Elizabeth—or, as she wrote to her, 'Mrs. Eliza Robinson'—was eighteen years of age, whilst Elizabeth was scarcely twelve. Lady Margaret was the heiress of a large fortune, and married, long before her friend was old enough to enter the world, William the second Duke of Portland, and the leader of the Whig party. After becoming a duchess she proved to

be a woman of unbounded munificence, and lived with splendid hospitality, chiefly at Bulstrode, in Buckinghamshire, where persons of high rank, more especially those eminent for talent, resorted. To her this country is deeply indebted for the preservation of the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, which she gave to the country. To her liberality we also owe the introduction of many valuable objects of art, more especially that of the Barberini or Portland vase into England.

To this friend Elizabeth Robinson's letters are chiefly addressed. As she grew up she became a *habituée* of that titled and intellectual circle which has perhaps never been surpassed in England. Their friendship lasted many years, and became of the most intimate character. It was the first that Elizabeth ever formed: the esteem she says, 'having grown with her' since she first loved the Lady Margaret 'and her doll.'

From the commencement of this friendship until her marriage, Elizabeth's life seems to have been cloudless. Sometimes we hear of her going eight miles to dance to the music of a blind fiddler, and coming back at two o'clock in the morning 'mightily pleased.' Sometimes after she and her family dressing for a ball, and 'getting into the coach with their ball airs,' they were turned back by a brook being swollen, and so much did she take it to heart that she could think of nothing but the ball. 'When any one asked me how I did, I cried out, "Tit for tat;" and when they bid me sit down I answered, "Jack of the Green"'—the names of fashionable dances at that time. Sometimes she writes still merrily of a past illness; she has 'swallowed the weight of an apothecary in medicine,' and is not the better, except that she is less patient and less credulous. She still confesses to being fond of gadding, and furious with her barrister brother, who goes down to the sessions, and 'when he had sold all his law, packed up his saleable eloquence, and carried it back to Lincoln's Inn, there to be left till called for,' yet he never went to the assize ball. Sometimes she goes to races for 'the good of the country,' and is always ready to dance to a Whig or a Tory tune; 'for she was not like dancing monkeys, who only cut capers for King George.' Then we find her banished to Canterbury, on account of the small-pox at

home, and staying at a prebend's house, where there were nothing but visits from prebends, 'deacons, and the rest of our church militant here on earth.' In vain do three out of her seven brothers go to see her : she confesses to be tired of the study of divines. Next she takes her flight to Bath, where she expects that 'with the spirits the waters give, and the spirits of the place, she shall be perfect *sal volatile*, and open her mouth and evaporate.' Then, not hearing from her friend, whom she always addresses as 'your Grace,' her lively fancy dictates a letter from the shades below ; she writes her epistle with the pen with which Mrs. Rowe used to write her letters from the dead to the living, and begs it may be laid where it cannot hear the cock crow, or it will vanish, having died a maid. So active, indeed, was the merry Eliza's mind and body that the duchess gave her the name of 'la petite Fidget.'

At Bath, nevertheless, the 'height of her happiness' proved nothing better than a 'pair royal at commerce and a peer of threescore,' who greatly prefers a queen of spades to her. Still she is amused, and tells, with great gusto, an anecdote of a lady of quality, who was very tall, and who nearly drowned a few women in the cross bath, which she ordered to be filled till it reached her chin, so that those who were below her stature, as well as below her rank, were obliged to 'cut or drown.'

Her twentieth year came, and found her without any serious thoughts of matrimony, the 'more reasonable passion of friendship' filling her heart. Perhaps, from the following passage in one of her letters it might be that a dower was wanting. 'What is a woman,' she asks, 'without gold or fee simple?—a toy while she is young, a trifle when she is old. Jewels of the first water are good for nothing till they are set ; but as for us, we are no brilliants, nobody's money till we have a foil and are encompassed with the precious metal. As for the intrinsic value of a woman, few know it, and nobody cares. Lord Foppington appraised all the female virtues and bought them in under a thousand pounds sterling, and the whole sex have agreed no one better understood the value of womankind.' Yet she passed much of her time at Whitehall, the Duke of Portland being in office, and went to every imaginable species of London gaiety ; sat to Zincke in the dress of Queen Anne

Boleyn for her picture, and was evidently one of the belles most in vogue about the middle of the last century. Meantime the number of her correspondents augmented ; Mrs. Donnellan, the friend of Swift, and Dr. Freind, afterwards Dean of Canterbury, were among those to whom she wrote when in serious mood. In the midst of this hurry of life she was again banished for fear of the fatal small-pox to a Kentish farm-house with nothing modern about it. Here she sat in an old crimson velvet chair, that she imagined must have been elder brother to that shown in Westminster Abbey as Edward the Confessor's. 'Tables there were in the room with more feet than caterpillars ;' a 'toilette that might have been worked by one of Queen Maud's maids of honour ; and a looking-glass which Rosamond or Jane Shore might have dressed their heads in.' Then the old clock, which 'had struck the blessed minutes of the Reformation, Restoration, Abdication, Revolution, and Accession,' seemed, she fancied, from its relation to time, to have some to eternity. This banishment, however, had its uses, in weaning from the world to reflection one worthy of being rescued from a mere life of vanity. 'Cicero and Plutarch's heroes were her only company.' She does not at this period mention those works of religious improvement which afterwards formed the consolation of her old age. Yet not long afterwards she thus writes : 'Few are the hours allowed to freedom, to leisure, to contemplation, to the adoration of our Maker, the examination of ourselves, and the consideration of the things about us.' 'Few there are that remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and trust to Him in their decline. We put off all things but death.' It was not until the year 1742, when Elizabeth Robinson was twenty-two years of age, that we find her signing herself E. Montagu. The choice which she made was consistent with that calm good sense which always gave a value to her letters and conversation. Long before she had made up her mind as to what manner of man should be her guide, her companion, and her master. Four years previously, she had denied the soft impeachment of being about to marry, and had then described her *beau idéal* to her friend the duchess.

'At present,' she wrote, 'I will tell you what sort of a man

I desire, which is above ten times as good as I deserve. He should have a great deal of sense to instruct me ; much wit to divert me ; beauty to please me ; good humour to indulge me when I am right, and reprove me gently when I am in the wrong ; money enough to afford me more than I can want, and as much as I can wish ; and constancy to like me as long as other people do, that is, till my face is wrinkled by age or scarred by the small-pox ; and after that I shall expect only civility in the room of love, for as Mrs. Clive sings—

‘ All I hope of mortal man
Is to love me while he can.’

She was, she owned, like Pygmalion, in love with a picture of her own drawing, and had never then seen the original.

The object of her choice proved to be Edward Montagu of Denton Hall, Northumberland, and Sandleford Priory in Berkshire. He was a man of an ancient and honourable family, and of considerable abilities, which were chiefly employed in the House of Commons in the service of the Whigs. His estates, which he bequeathed to his wife, were considerable, so that one part of her wish was certainly fulfilled. How far the marriage was one, on her part, of attachment seems questionable. The ceremony of marriage was performed on the 5th of August, 1743, by Dr. Freind ; her respected correspondent, to whom she refers, when writing to the Duchess of Portland, to prove that she shed not at the altar, ‘ one single tear ;’ ‘ yet,’ she adds, ‘ my mind was in no mirthful mood indeed.’ ‘ I have,’ she adds, ‘ a great hope of happiness ; the world as you say, speaks well of Mr. Montagu, and I have many obligations to him, which must gain my particular esteem ; but such a change of life must furnish one with a thousand anxious thoughts.’ And with this cool and sensible view she began her married life.

By her friend and preceptor, Conyers Middleton, the union was, however, hailed as between a blooming and intellectual bride with a man ‘ not only of figure and fortune, but of great knowledge and understanding.’ But it seemed that the **very** cultivation of that understanding was to Mrs. Montagu a source of sorrow. Mr. Montagu was a great mathematician for that

day, but set, to borrow the words of Dr. Beattie, 'too much value on mathematical evidence, and piqued himself too much on his knowledge of that science.' In other words, he was sceptical; and his wife, when she perceived him in the decline of life, without that light, devoid of which all here is dark indeed, endeavoured, through Dr. Beattie, to bring his mind from that fallacious philosophy, in which he fatally confided, to faith and religious hope; but, it appears, without the much-desired effect.

Henceforth a great portion of Mrs. Montagu's life was passed in the country, where her cheerful temper and neighbourly habits endeared her to all near the different abodes in which she resided. Atterthorpe, about a day's journey from Doncaster, and beautifully situated on the River Swale, was one of the first places that she visited after a journey of six days from Kent. Here she often went to the almshouse, and the schools founded by her uncle, 'where the young were taught industry, the old content;' and found her happiness in her fireside, and that only when it was not 'littered with queer creatures.' She had not, in the midst of her pining after London and its charms, ceased to take delight in nature, and describes to her friend, Mrs. Donnellan, that wild tract called the Dales, with enthusiasm. Yet she owned herself a very swallow, as she could not abide in the country in winter; confessed she had a tendency to dulness; that she loved to be a spectator of the rapid world whilst her 'little machine' was at rest; and that the 'lullaby' of country conversation affected her with drowsiness; the news and chat of her own neighbourhood affecting her no more than the 'Jewish Chronicle' did a modern infidel prime minister. She was, indeed, formed to be the 'Queen of the Blues.'

Meantime, she was finding out her husband's perfections, his integrity, benevolence, and strong affections. Ill health came, however, to dash her felicity, and Mr. Montagu was obliged to have her at Atterthorpe, and to attend Parliament. 'I help him on,' she wrote, 'with honour's boots, and behold him go without murmuring.' He left her sister with her; there was an extraordinary likeness between them, hence Mrs. Montagu always called her sister, 'Rea.' Rea was blessed with a temper of

continual sunshine, and made even the dulness of the country endurable to her poor 'Fidget.'

Mrs. Montagu had now hopes of becoming a mother. This she viewed with her usual good sense, and with the faith that had survived or withstood the contagion of Dr. Middleton's opinions. Mrs. Delany describes her as looking, before this event, 'handsome, fat, and merry, &c.' She remarked that in our addresses to Heaven, we should only be earnest in thanksgiving. Much as she wished to have children, and that 'her affections might be kept living in those she loved,' she dared not trust herself to desire objects of so near concern and fondness as children. A son was born: 'the young Fidget,' as she called him, loved laughing and dancing, and was worthy of the mother he sprang from. He seemed well and strong, and his mother's letters are, for some time, the short period of his little life, full of hopes, and prayers, and fondness. Her domestic happiness seemed perfect. Early in the September of 1744 her child died of convulsions. The blow was terrible; and no other offspring were ever granted to make it a less fearful blank.

'I am well enough,' she wrote to the Duchess of Portland, 'as to health of body, but God knows the sickness of the soul is far worse. I know it is my duty to be resigned and to submit. I hope time will bring me comfort. I will give it my best endeavours: it is in afflictions like mine that reason ought to exert itself, else one would fall beneath the stroke. She tried to solace herself by reading, and to control her feelings by the example of her afflicted husband. She hoped the same Providence that snatched this dear blessing from her would give her others; but the hope was not fulfilled. Elizabeth Montagu, then twenty-three years of age, had a long life before her. Beauty, talents, fortune, friends, a happy marriage, influence in society, a gay genial temper, were hers. But she was henceforth childless.

She was now in her maturity, of the middle stature, with a slight stoop, so that the fire of her beautiful deep blue eyes was somewhat subdued by an air of modesty; her dark brown hair clustering over her throat and face; her high arched eyebrows; her complexion, notwithstanding the attacks made on it by the

envious, singularly brilliant and yet delicate, completed the charms of her person; her manners as dignified as they were polished: with all these advantages she may have been sought by the wisest and best men (who have never any objection to youth and beauty) of her time. The scholar and the politician, the wit, the critic, the orator crowded around her. Her wit was so abundant, so fresh, so involuntary, that she found it difficult to temper it, and to adapt it to society. But her extreme good nature and good breeding brought it under control. It was never coarse, never disagreeable. She could curb it at the right point. The gaiety of her disposition, her love of society, never drew her into folly. Discreet, correct, the admiration felt for her was that which we feel for purity and elevation of mind. Talking of '*her young family*' as cordially as if she had been married these three years.

She was happy in her friends, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, Young the poet, Gilbert West, Lord Chatham, Stillingfleet, Beattie, Lord Kaimes, Burke, and last, not least, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Garrick, were amongst those who honoured and visited her. She chose her friends for their merits, not for their station; yet she had all society to choose from. She was, nevertheless, accused by Miss Burney and Mrs. Thrale of want of heart, and considered by those two ladies as a character to respect rather than to love: '*wanting that don d'aimer* by which alone love can be made fond or faithful.' Nevertheless her affections to her own family are apparent in every line of Mrs. Montagu's letters. It is possible that her circle of friends was too large for her regard for them to be very deep; and years after her marriage we find her writing to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter: 'You and I, who have never been in love,' a sort of acknowledgment that her marriage was, like almost every other action of her life, the result of reason. So far Miss Burney's opinion of her seems to be confirmed.

Henceforth, Mrs. Montagu appears to belong to society alone. The last century, it has been well remarked, formed an era in all matters of taste: the arts, long dispelled by civil commotions, had been degraded during the reign of Charles II. into the subservient office of portrait painting; they were happily

revived, in the very hey-day of Mrs. Montagu's life, by the genius of Reynolds. Not only as an artist, but as a man of intellect and refinement, Reynolds infused into the higher classes that love of art which has never since died out amongst them. The society at his house, easy and inexpensive, though composed almost entirely of the most eminent people of his time, may have suggested to Mrs. Montagu that assemblage of *literati*, which soon acquired the name of the 'Blue Stockings;' and 'to do a bit of Blue,' as Dr. Burney said, came into vogue.

Reynolds, whilst at that time painting portraits at twelve guineas a head, used to assemble Dr. Johnson, Richard Cumberland, Edmund Burke, the Thrales, and Mrs. Montagu, not to mention many others who sat around the fire on which sang the tea-kettle which Johnson wished 'might never be cold;' Reynolds, 'the man who could not,' as Johnson well observed, 'be spoiled by prosperity,' found it essential for his mental powers to mix in intellectual society; and, aided by Johnson, established the 'Literary Club.' This famous society met at the 'Turk's Head, in Gerrard Street, Soho, every Monday evening, not to a costly, heavy dinner, but to supper. The standing toast was Mrs. Montagu; who for two successive years invited the club to a dinner at her house, curiosity being her motive, and possibly a desire to mingle with their conversation the charm of her own.

During the early part of her long life Mrs. Montagu had distinguished herself by an 'Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakspeare,' a composition which vindicated our immortal dramatist from the gross attacks of Voltaire. She had also published three 'Dialogues of the Dead,' which were printed with those of Lord Lyttelton. In the meridian of her days she delighted to assemble around her, in an easy manner, those whose merits she could so well appreciate. For many years her time was divided between Sandford Priory, near Newbury, and Hill Street. When in London, she received an assemblage of intellectual persons, at first unpremeditatedly; and the only difference between these receptions and those of the fashionable world was, that cards were not introduced. The party did not

consist, as literary parties are usually thought to do, solely of those who had written something; but was made up of actors, beaux, divines, and pretty or agreeable women. By the side of the learned Elizabeth Carter was found the brilliant Mrs. Boscawen, whose husband, Admiral Boscawen, glancing at Dr. Stillingfleet's grey stockings—that learned divine being an oddity and a sloven—gave these meetings the name of the ‘Blue-socking Society,’ merely meaning that the full dress, then *de rigueur* (as still abroad) in the evening, was to be dispensed with.

‘Oh!’ cried a foreigner of distinction, catching up the expression, ‘*Les bas bleus!*’ and the *sobriquet* is still applied to all who assume the literary character.

There was, however, as Hannah More has told us, in her poem on the Blues, no parade of knowledge in this agreeable assembly. Learning was not disfigured by pedantry, nor good taste tainted by affectation. The general conversation was free from calumny or levity; the presiding genius, graceful and good as she was, seemed to cast her mantle over the whole.

Garrick, who, as Johnson said, ‘had made his profession respectable, whilst it made him rich,’ was a favourite guest of Mrs. Montagu's. ‘He was the only actor,’ Johnson remarked, ‘who had ever been a master both of tragedy and comedy.’ ‘And yet,’ added the great moralist, ‘I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a dinner-table:’ a sentiment in which Mrs. Montagu concurred.

Destined first for the bar, next a wine-merchant, finally the founder of the modern stage, how pleasant must have been Garrick's anecdote; what a relief after the scholar-like talk of Lord Lyttelton, the responsive pedantry of Mrs. Carter, and the propriety of Mrs. Chapone! One can fancy him telling the anecdote of his sitting to a poor painter, not very skilful, and when a certain progress had been made in the portrait, changing his countenance whilst the artist's back was turned; and when the patient man had worked on so as to alter the likeness, and make it what he *then* saw, how he had seized the opportunity, and changed his expression a third time; how the ill-used painter had thrown down his pallet and pencils, ex-

claiming, that he perceived he was painting the devil, and would touch the canvas no more.

How amusing, also, must it have been to hear Garrick bantering Johnson about the Cock-lane Ghost, a tale which the superstitious Johnson credited, but which the player disbelieved ' Horace Walpole, in his prime, when first these meetings were in vogue, but latterly, when Dr. Beattie saw him in 1791, though still 'well bred, and of pleasant discourse, martyred by the gout;' Lord Lyttelton, who was supposed to have felt for Mrs. Montagu a tenderer sentiment than that of friendship; and the great Lord Chatham, were the constant visitors of Mrs. Montagu's house.

In the latter part of the last century, that which was once an intimate circle became so fashionable a resort, that the rooms of Montagu House were thronged, and the intimate, tea-drinking, social character of the assembly merged into one far less agreeable. It must have been then that Mrs. Montagu was sometimes, according to Miss Burney, 'brilliant in diamonds, solid in judgment, critical in talk; sometimes flashy, and an immense talker; but still eminently courteous and agreeable.'

After Mrs. Montagu took possession of Montagu House, her entertainments were given on a scale of great splendour. Miss Burney describes a grand breakfast, at which all the company ate enormously, though, as it was remarked, had Mrs. Montagu invited them to dinner at three o'clock, her friends would have exclaimed, 'What does it mean? Who can dine at three o'clock?'

The gallery of Montagu House was, on that occasion, thronged by the survivors of those early friends whom Mrs. Montagu had so delighted to collect as her Blue-stocking circle. Seward, the compiler of the 'Anecdotes,' the Burneys and Boscawens were there; but Garrick, Johnson, and Reynolds were gone; and the sceptical and intellectual master of the house had disappeared from the scene. In 1755 Mr. Montagu died, as Dr. Beattie affirms, in 'extreme old age,' so that he must have been many years his wife's senior. His wife's efforts were directed, during his last days, to his eternal welfare, upon which

Dr. Beattie held many conferences with him, but, it appears, without any satisfactory result.

Happily, from amongst her family ties, Mrs. Montagu found still some objects for that affection which only the links of blood can endear. She adopted Matthew, the son of her eldest brother, Matthew Robinson; and bequeathing to him her whole fortune, required him to take the name of Montagu. To this descendant, who became in 1829 fourth Baron Rokeby, we owe the publication of Mrs. Montagu's letters; and on him devolved the office of an editor, which he performed with as little pains and care as possible. The present gallant Lord Rokeby is the great nephew of Mrs. Montagu. It was of Matthew Montagu that Sir Nathaniel Wraxall related, 'that General Montagu Matthew said in the House of Commons, upon some mistake relative to their identity, "that there was no more likeness between Montagu Matthew and Matthew Montagu than between a chestnut horse and a horse-chestnut."' Having been brought up under his aunt's especial care, Mr. Montagu is said to have received an education far more suited to make a man of letters than a statesman. He appears not to have distinguished himself in either of those capacities.

One turns reluctantly from the bright yet quiet circle of the original *bus bleus* to the gayer receptions of Mrs. Montagu's later days. In the early part of her reign, as a 'Queen of Society,' her empire was divided with the famous Viscountess Townshend, at whose house a more fashionable, and perhaps a less unexceptionable class of *littérateurs* used to meet without ceremony in the evenings. Lady Townshend, who succeeded Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lady Hervey, had figured as a leader of society. Here George Selwyn, Charles Fox, and Sheridan, who was just in the dawn of that career which even Pitt allowed to be full of eloquence and the powers of fancy, but which he represented to be devoid of reason and truth, shone conspicuously; and in other bright spheres, until reckless habits and vices obscured their career. The political and literary clique at Lady Townshend's was now extinct; and Whitehall had ceased to be the centre of wit and fashion since 1788.

Every year, on the other hand, until her death, added to Mrs. Montagu's enlarging circle of votaries. Hers was the very house which is now so greatly wanted in London, where there is no point of union for persons of congenial tastes and pursuits; and no intimate evening society, as in France, in which the pleasures of conversation may be enjoyed with nothing but the *bouillotte* on the table, the *brioche* by the fire. Nothing can be worse than the present form of metropolitan society for the intellect, the spirits, the health. 'I know half the west end of London,' said the late Lord Dudley to the late eminent surgeon, Mr. Copeland, 'and yet there is not a house in which I could walk in and ask a cup of tea.' Always on the defensive, the English hedge round everything that is agreeable with exclusiveness, and encumber it with ostentation: and even were Mrs. Montagu, in all her perfection of mind, person, and position to arise from the dead, to light up the gallery and the drawing-rooms, and call the spirits of the departed from their tombs, we should, I fear, consider her parties as 'very mixed.' For though she was herself well-born, the associate of duchesses and countesses, rich and gracious, she was un-English enough to call into her presence the lowly born, 'under-bred people,' if eminent in any way, and harsh enough to banish thence titled sinners of both sexes. We are more liberal now to the sinful, and less indulgent to the unrefined!

Mrs. Montagu, for instance, brought into the unshrinking contact of prime ministers and leaders of *ton*, James Beattie, the son of a small retail dealer at Lawrence-Kirk, in the county of Kincardine—his father, a man who kept what is called 'the shop,' in his native village. She cherished, she assisted him; and, with equal *mauvais ton*, dropped the acquaintance of Thomas, the bad Lord Lyttelton, the pleasantest scapegrace that ever sullied by misdeeds a good name. Thomas Lord Lyttelton was a 'meteor whose rapid extinction could not be regretted;' but Beattie was like the evening star, whose light we hail as the harbinger of repose. Thomas Lord Lyttelton was the spoiled child of fortune. Vain, elegant, and profligate, in the morning, he was, as Mr. Curtis said, 'melancholy, squalid, disgusting, and half repentant; in the evening the delight, the

admiration, and the leader of society ; always fearful and superstitious, yet not religious.' For while his youthful and almost handsome face, with the hair turned back over a wide forehead, his bag wig, his exquisite ruffles, and an expression half good-humoured, half sarcastic, might be seen in the great assemblies at Montagu House, where he was long tolerated for his father's sake : but he soon became too notorious for any society, and vanished from his own sphere into a lower orbit. His death was predicted to him when in the last stage of decline—at thirty-five years of age—by an apparition in the form of a young lady whom he had seduced. The hour was foretold ; and though his friends set the clock on, he expired to the minute that she had predicted. This is the only ghost story in modern times that has been carefully investigated and minutely recorded ; and the short account of it is inscribed on a brass plate in the house near Epsom in which the titled sinner died. The three last years of his existence were passed in penitence, and in an attempt at reform ; but the period, as one of his friends wrote, ' of his emancipation from the fetters of pleasure and indolence also marked his dissolution.' Such was the detestation of his character that his funeral took place at night, for fear that the people of Hagley should tear his remains from the coffin in fury.

Thomas Lord Lyttelton was a splendid speaker, and a wit, a Maccaroni (or dandy) of the first class, a man of wonderful fascination : perhaps in the reign of Charles II. he might have been almost respectable ; with all his wickedness he must have been a brilliant person in society. Dr. Beattie, on the contrary, educated at the parish-school of Lawrence-Kirk, then himself a schoolmaster, knowing, for many a long year, no better society than that which a peasant's cottage affords ; next a professor at Aberdeen, a pedagogue, speaking broad Scotch, must have been one of the most virtuous bores in existence. But he had, though, as we now think, feebly, the seeds of poetic excellence in him : he was pious, hard-working, patient ; yet even in his prime he could not have been a very agreeable object. ' For have I not,' he says to his friend Charles Boyd, ' neadaches, like Pope ? vertigo like Swift ? gray hairs, like

Homer? Do I not wear large shoes, for fear of corns, like Virgil? and sometimes complain of sore eyes, like Horace? He seems to have had all the infirmities of these great men without **their** genius.

When he was thirty-two years of age, he became known to Mrs. Montagu by report. For his own part he regarded her as an honour to her sex and to human nature. Even then he talked of his broken health; but soon afterwards a fearful calamity happened to him. His wife, Mary Dun, daughter of the rector of the grammar-school at Aberdeen, had inherited insanity from her mother; and was herself sufficiently wrongheaded to make others wretched, but not to be placed under restraint. Eventually her state, which made poor Beattie inconceivably miserable, broke out into madness.

He had his mother also to support: his means were so limited that he was intoxicated with delight when £52 10s. were paid him by the publisher for his famous 'Essay on Truth,' which it had taken him four years to write, and which he had written three times over; yet the worthy son of the retail dealer is to be envied, in stern compassion with the once idolized heir of the grave and good George Lord Lyttelton.

In 1771, Beattie went to London, and was introduced by Dr. Gregory, the author of 'A Father's Legacy to his Daughters,' to Mrs. Montagu. Never, certainly, was an author more plentifully rewarded with fame than was Beattie for his 'Essay on Truth' to say nothing of his poetry. He received a degree at Oxford and was ordered to Kew Green, where he had an interview with George III. and his queen. 'I never stole a book but one,' said the kind-hearted monarch, 'and that was yours; I stole it from the queen to give it to Lord Hertford to read.' Then his majesty entering into conversation, said he could not believe 'that any thinking man could be an Atheist, unless he could bring himself to believe that he made himself,' an idea that seemed so satisfactory, that King George repeated it two or three times to the queen. Beattie received also the more substantial benefit of a pension.

Nevertheless, unremitting anxieties marked the career of this good man. It was his fate to lose a beloved son, Mrs. Mon-

tagu's godson ; to watch over his wife in all the various stages of her malady ; and, expiring, to know that she who survived him was hopelessly insane.

He found in music, in which he was a fine performer, a source of infinite consolation. His slouching gait ; his large, dark, melancholy eyes ; his broad accent, and a kind of simplicity which was always gentle, but yet peculiar, must have marked him out to the derision of the *beau monde* of Portman Square. Short were his periods of peace or rest. 'Ever since the commencement of our vacation,' he wrote, in 1790, to Sir William Forbes, 'I have been passing from one scene of perplexity and sorrow to another.' At last all was closed in death. Loved and mourned, he died three years after his kind friend, Mrs. Montagu. The famous Dr. Gregory, writing his epitaph on Mrs. Montagu, said, in 1799 : 'She has to me, on all occasions, ever since 1771, been a faithful and affectionate friend, especially in seasons of distress and difficulty.' A simple but heartfelt encomium. To this excellent man was the regard given which was withheld from the dissolute and agreeable peer by the rightly thinking.

Yet the Queen of the Blue Stockings was eminently charitable in her judgments : 'I would much rather, even in that very world where charity may be less in fashion than prudence, be accounted a person of inviolable charity than of infallible wisdom. In the hazards of a weak and fallible judgment, I had rather fall into error than into cruel injustice.'

Her useful and happy life was now drawing to its close.

She had ever, to use her own words, 'enjoyed the present so as not to hurt the future.' 'Every day,' she thought, 'ought to be considered as a period apart ; some virtue should be exercised ; some knowledge improved, and the value of happiness well understood ; some pleasure comprehended in it : some duty to ourselves or others must be infringed if any of these things are neglected.'

She had never wished for old age ; yet length of years is usually allotted to women of letters, and was so to her.

Her decline was solaced by her own high thoughts, and cheered by the regard of all who knew her. Though nearly

blind for many years, the hours that had never been misspent in cards—the fashionable pastime of that day—were not passed in repining. She had seen the seeds of gambling fostered in early youth. ‘If I had the education of a child of large fortune, it should not in its earliest infancy play a trick with a court-card. But, alas! it is too late that we taste the wormwood in these things.’ She had not now to regret that ‘*whisk*,’ as she writes it, and quadrille were to her impossible. She had ever esteemed the delights of friendship more highly than those of love; and certainly they failed her not in her old age.

‘Many guests,’ she wrote, ‘my heart has not admitted: such as there are do it honour, and a long and intimate acquaintance has preceded their admittance: they were invited in it by its best virtues; they passed through the examination of severity, nay, even answered some questions of suspicion that inquired of their constancy and sincerity; but now they are delivered over to the keeping of constant faith and love; for doubt never visits the friend entirely, but only examines such as would come in, lest the way should be too common.’ What a beautiful definition of friendship!—but it is, alas! of the friendship of the old school. Friends are now made with the speed of rail-roads, to be dropped at any station in life’s journey, to get rid of them when they become a burden.

In her youth she had thus spoken of extreme old age:—‘If the near prospect of death is terrible, it is a melancholy thing when every day of added life is a miracle: but such is the happy and merciful order of things, that life is eternal, and therefore we cannot outlive it. It has for our amusement the midsummer’s dream and the winter’s tale: the ear, deaf to all other music, is still soothed by its flattering voice.’

The Duchess of Portland died nearly fifteen years before Mrs. Montagu. Eight years previous to that event, Mrs. Montagu had visited Bulstrode, ‘the scene of more tender and sincere joy,’ when she returned to it, ‘than any other place.’ The dignity and piety which distinguished the duchess through life, the excellence of her conduct as a wife, a mother, and a friend, were not excelled by any lady of rank in her day.

Mrs. Montagu, in the decline of life, visited Dr. Gregory

(The following information was obtained from the records of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., Office of Research and Statistics, Bureau of Census.)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



MRS. MONTAGUE'S ENTERTAINMENT TO THE HAYMAKERS.

whose daughter long resided with her, at Edinburgh. When at Sandlesford Priory, the benevolence of that heart which left a sum for the poor chimney-sweepers to enjoy one holiday in their dark life, showed itself in regard to the haymakers, thirty six of whom she had at dinner under the shade of a grove in her garden.

When they worked well she loved to see them eat as well as labour, and often sent them a treat, to which the haymakers 'brought an appetite that gave a better relish than the Madeira wine and Cayenne pepper in which an alderman stews his turtle.'

Two years before the close of the last century, Mrs. Montagu continued to receive company at home, although she had ceased to leave her house. 'Mrs. Montagu is so broken down,' Dr. Burney wrote to his daughter, 'as not to go out—almost wholly blind and very feeble.' During the ensuing year a report was even prevalent that she was dead: but her decease did not occur till the year 1800, when she expired at Montagu House, aged eighty.

Of this excellent woman Dr. Beattie says: 'I have known several ladies in literature, but she excelled them all; and in conversation she had more *wit* than any other person, male or female.'

These, he adds, were her slighter accomplishments. 'She was a sincere Christian, both in faith and practice, so that by her influence and example she did great good.' Yet Mrs. Montagu was not so fortunate as to escape enemies: Dr. Johnson especially disliked one who had often eclipsed him. Nevertheless, Johnson, as Miss Burney asserts, did justice to Mrs. Montagu when others did not praise her improperly. He delighted in seeing her humbled.

'To-morrow, sir,' said Mrs. Thrale one day (at Streatham), 'Mrs. Montagu dines with us, and then you will have talk enough.' Johnson began to see-saw, and then, turning to Miss Burney, cried, 'Down with her, Burney! down with her at once! spare her not! down with her! attack her! you are a rising wit, and she is at the top. So at her, Burney!—at her, and down with her!'

He had, it seems, put her out of countenance when she had last dined there, out of wanton savageness ; but promised now not to contradict her as he did then, unless she provoked him again. Yet he acknowledged that she diffused more ‘knowledge in her conversation than almost any woman he knew—he might almost say, any man ;’ to which Mrs. Thrale added that she knew no man equal to her except the doctor, and Burke. Nevertheless, after a time—

‘Come, Burney,’ he resumed, ‘shall you and I study our parts against Mrs. Montagu comes?’

‘I think,’ said Mrs. Thrale, ‘you should begin with Miss Gregory, and down with her first.’

‘No, no!’ cried the doctor, ‘always fly at the eagle—down with Mrs. Montagu herself. I hope she will come full of “Evelina.”’ They could not, however, prevail on Dr. Johnson to stay for this encounter. Early in the day, Mrs. Montagu arrived, accompanied by Miss Gregory, a fine-looking young woman. Miss Burney’s description of Mrs. Montagu, about the age of sixty, corresponds tolerably with that of others who knew her intimately. She was thin and spare, and looked younger than she really was, from that circumstance. Every line of her face showed intelligence ; but her eyes had in them an expression of severity and sarcasm which was not attractive. She was very cheerful, with a great flow of words, but apt to become dictatorial and sententious. It is said that this manner was acquired ; and indeed one can hardly reconcile in this stilted uncompromising woman, the merry, discursive Elizabeth Robinson of former days. Neither was her voice musical, nor her whole style feminine ; and whilst what she said was excellent, it failed, on that account, to charm, though it might often convince.

Then, as she advanced in years, her style of dress by no means suited the decline of her brilliant life. Even when approaching fourscore, she could not relinquish her diamonds and her bows, which formed, of an evening, the perpetual ornament of her emaciated person. Wraxall, who is only equalled in ill nature by Miss Burney, thought that these glittering appendages of opulence were used to dazzle those whom her literary repu-

tation failed to astound : but they were probably merely the adornments which the habit of using them had rendered almost essential.

Notwithstanding these imperfections, to be invited to Montagu House was the aim of all rising *literati*. Mrs. Montagu was the Madame du Deffand of London ; and her fame as the Queen of Society rested not only on her intellect, her 'Essay on Shakspeare,' her conversational talents, but also on the solid basis of her being the best dinner-giver in London. Sometimes, however, her parties failed : witness the meeting of the Bishop of Chester and Mrs. Thrale, when the bishop waited for Mrs. Thrale to begin speaking, and Mrs. Thrale waited for the bishop, and Mrs. Montagu harangued away, 'caring not one fig who spoke, as long as she could herself be listened to.' Not to be welcomed to Hill Street, which was an abode of much elegance, or to Mrs. Montagu's new house in Portman Square, would have made the great critic himself miserable. Even at a certain dreaded dinner at Streatham, into which Miss Burney walked with a company step, Johnson could not help asking, in a jocose manner, if he should be invited to see it. And when Mrs. Montagu asked them all to a house-warming, fixing *Easter-day* for their visit, a general emotion of pleasure ran through the party. There was about the close of the eighteenth century so great a change in costume, that the ancient lady in her diamonds and her knots of ribbon must have looked almost like an inhabitant of another period. As Mrs. Montagu came forth in all this finery, she mingled with a fashionable throng who, after the year 1794, were wholly changed in dress and style. Her youth and middle age had been passed with those who in private life wore the costume which is now confined to the levée or drawing-room, but which was then assumed everywhere and every day. Fox and his clique, affecting a contempt for dress, although formerly coxcombs of the greatest pretensions, first threw a discredit on it ; and these new ideas passed from the House of Commons to the clubs, from the clubs to the private assemblies of the capital. Dress was in a sort of atrophy, and Jacobinism gave it its death-blow. Pantaloon, cropped hair, shoe-strings, came into use. Ruffles and buckles went out with powder, and

etiquette, in a form, was also vanishing by degrees. Such were the men : whilst the ladies, casting off their tresses, laying aside their cushions and their curls, their lappets and ribbons, had their locks cut round *à la victime*, as if ready for the stroke of the guillotine.

To carry out the Republican frenzy, the Grecian style was adopted ; short waists, sleeves fastened by a button ; tight skirts ; a drapery suited to the climates of Rome and Greece, but almost death in our foggy atmosphere ; and thus distinctions began to be levelled in this country. It was, perhaps, to repel this innovation that the 'queen of the blues' was still seen blazing in diamonds—a mark for the ridicule of those who lived in new lights, as the doctrines of revolutionized France were then considered among a certain set or party in the great world.

Another enemy of Mrs. Montagu's was Richard Cumberland, a 'Sir Fretful Plagiary,' who could endure no one's works but his own. The 'Observer,' of which he was the editor and chief contributor, was full of personalities ; and he attacked Mrs. Montagu, under the name of 'Vanessa,' with much acrimony.

The Blue-stocking assemblies, as they were styled, remained in their perfection fifteen years, from 1770 to 1785 ; but declined after the death of Dr. Johnson, who had formed around him a circle that was then broken up. Horace Walpole was after that period devoured by the gout : Sir Joshua Reynolds could not, from his deafness, contribute to conversation. Mrs. Chapone, who, though a woman of great knowledge, had one of the most repulsive exteriors ever seen, was not calculated, any more than her letters, to enliven. Burke sometimes hovered for a short time in Portman Square, but was absorbed in politics, and soon disappeared. Erskine, then a rising barrister, and like many such of his own time and ours, involved in debt, sometimes enchanted the lingerers in what was now comparatively a desert, by his vivacity and versatility of talent. Sir William Pepys, Topham Beauclerk, and Bennet Langton were still there, and still welcomed. Hume and Adam Smith, as well as Robertson, lived in Edinburgh, and Gibbon never af-

fectured 'the blues;' and it is indeed probable that neither he nor Hume nor Smith would have been received by a society so averse to their doctrines and their publications.

To Mrs. Montagu is wholly due the origin of the literary society of the metropolis. It is indeed highly probable that she imbibed her notions of social and intellectual intercourse from the many foreigners expatriated here. The first literary meetings are said to have been held by Hortensia Mancini, niece to Cardinal Mazarin, who assembled in her apartments men of letters, among whom St. Evremond and De Grammont figured.

But no Englishwoman ever succeeded so completely in drawing men from the clubs, and women from the faro-table or quadrille, to the disquisition of literature and science, so thoroughly as Mrs. Montagu.

She is remembered chiefly for this service done to Society; in which, as she had no predecessors, she may be said to have had few successors to be compared to her. As a writer she was respectable; her 'Essay on Shakspeare' was praised by Beattie, who has pronounced it the most elegant piece of criticism in our language or in any other.

Her letters have been also highly eulogized. Ten years after her death they were given to the world, and later the correspondence of her matured years was added to her earlier epistles. These last have, we think, a peculiar charm. Models of pure English as they are, they are easy, sparkling, and sensible. No young person can read them without deriving advantage; without an increased desire for improvement; without finding the sympathies of the heart go along with the advancement of the intellect; and it is a satisfaction to know that she who penned those letters, not only thought wisely, but acted well; and living in the world, rose above its follies and meanesses with the aid of faith. To say that she had her weaknesses is but to say that she was mortal: that she had great benevolence, enlarged views, tender feelings for the unhappy, a sincere reverence, above all things, for virtue, is but justice rendered to the merits of Elizabeth Montagu.



MARY COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

Penshurst.—Sir Henry Sidney.—A Mother's Letter.—Sir Philip.—Brother and Sister.—Astræa.—Spenser.—The Earl of Pembroke.—Mary Sidney's Portrait.—Massinger.—The Poet of the Hod.—The Green-room of the Masque.—Dr. Donne.—Donne Pre-deceases Himself.—Donne's Living Ghost.—Philip Sidney.—An Old Anecdote.—The 'Arcadia.'—Astrology Right.—Very Awful!—The Plague of the Family.—Aldersgate in the 17th Century.—'Sydney's Sister, Pembroke's Mother.'

CERTAIN families among the English aristocracy have seemed to hold a monopoly of intelligence, honourable ambition, and virtue: several successive generations conferred on the Sidneys and the Herberts especially those distinctive attributes; and these were happily united in the sixteenth century by marriage. Mary Sidney, the sister of that true Christian hero Sir Philip, in becoming the wife of Henry Earl of Pembroke, the son of the most wealthy and respected of the English Peers, and the father of one of the greatest patrons of learning in his time, William Earl of Pembroke, brought to the splendour of Wilton the gifts and graces of Penshurst.

To the characteristics of Mary Countess of Pembroke, the term 'illustrious' might almost be applied. She was distinguished among contemporary wives and mothers for her piety, her abilities, her erudition, and for her social qualities. She stood at the head of society in her age. She influenced the tone of that society; she was its example, its ornament. She befriended genius, and she gathered around her the gifted and the virtuous.

This admirable woman was the daughter of Sir Henry Sidney, of Penshurst Place, in Kent. In that ancient pile, around which ancestral oaks, planted in the reign of Charles the First, and noble elms recall the remembrance of the old Norman line

of Sidneys who have successively observed their growth, or delighted in their shade—amongst these there will come back to the imaginative who ponder on the past, an ancient councillor of Elizabeth's reign, clad in a close ruff, tight doublet, black yet girded with lace ; a steeple-crowned hat, bombasted trunk hose, and nether hose of good linsey, for silk so wise a man would abjure : and, whilst we view in this phantom of fancy the legislator, the benefactor, the country gentleman, the courtier, we recognize also, in his military bearing, the general and the conqueror. Such, and in so many characters united in one, was Sir Henry Sydney. To him the Countess Mary of Pembroke owed her birth. His name is still heard beneath those spreading forest trees ; still are the Sidneys ours : still is Penshurst theirs. The old tenement, more quaint than grand, that witnessed the career of Henry Sidney, the youth of his son, the dawn of his daughter's good and sagacious mind, is still a national boast. Given by Edward the Sixth to Sir William Sidney, his father's steward of the household and chamberlain, it is picturesque rather than important ; a manor-house—neither a castle nor a palace. *Penshurst Place*—or as the villagers used to call it, retaining the old spelling, 'Pencester Place'—could not have been defended : it has a noble hall for hospitality, but no accommodation for a royal progress in those days, or for monster entertainments in ours. It is more interesting than handsome, more traditional than historical. What a repose pervades its parks, its pleasaunce ; the small village and the old decaying church ! How adapted yon glades seem for Sir Henry's walk and talk ! How suited the somewhat flat, yet fair expanse of turf for the gravity of old footsteps, or for the revelry of reckless, happy childhood !

Believing in races, with Dr. Arnold, who must have had vast opportunities of studying fully their manifestations at Rugby, one looks far up the roll of names to see whence came the nobility of nature which has made the Sidneys a proverb for honour, for letters, for piety, for courage. We find them descended from Gundred, or Gundreda, the daughter of William the Conqueror. Her tomb was discovered some fifteen years ago in the church at Lewes in Sussex, after being hidden some-

how and somewhere and for some reason, unseen and untold, during all these eventful centuries. The inscription on that tomb is remarkable. Gundred was married to the Earl de Warren, who was governor of Lewes, then a most important trust. Her character is described by all historians as singularly devout, benignant, and high-toned. She was, says the inscription on her tomb, ‘Mary to her God : Martha to her neighbour.’ From her, through the marriage of her grand-daughter to the Earl of Warwick, the direct ancestor of the Sidneys, are this fine old race descended.

A more exalted character than that of Sir Henry Sidney is scarcely to be met in history. It is rare in any time to find a consummate legislator, a valiant general, a first-rate privy councillor ; a man of the world in every sense, as holy as an anchorite, yet mingling with his love to God human interests and affections which chastened his conduct and elevated his heart. He was the benefactor of the poor Irish ; his soul rose nobly above self-aggrandisement, and he scorned to enrich himself as viceroy at the expense of that impoverished country. His wife, the mother of Mary Sidney, was—and it is much to say—worthy of being united to a Sidney. The Lady Mary Dudley whom, wisely, Sir Henry chose for his wife, was the daughter of John Duke of Northumberland. ‘As she was of descent,’ writes the herald Arthur Collins, ‘of great nobility, so she was by nature of a noble and congenial spirit.’ Such was the mother of Philip and Mary Sidney.

Never did parents more fondly love their children than this truly noble pair. Their great object was not, however, for present happiness or advancement, but to prepare their treasures for an eternal sphere. In a manuscript letter preserved in the Somers Collection we find what is endorsed, ‘A postscript by my Lady Sidney in the skirts of my Lord President’s letter to her sayd son Philip :’—

‘Your noble and carefull father had taken paynes (with his own hand) to give you in this his letter so wise, so learned, and most requisite precepts for you to follow with a diligent and humble, thankfull minde, as I will not withdrawe your eies from

beholding and reverent honouring the same ; no, not so long time as to read any letter from me ; and, therefore, at this time I will write unto you no other letter then this : whereby I first bless you, with my desire to God to plant you in his grace ; and, secondarily, warne you to have alwaies before the eies of your mind these excellent counsailes of my lord, your deere father, and that you fail not continually once in foure or five daies to reade them over. * * *

‘ Farewell, my little Philip, and once againe the Lord bless you ! Your loving mother,

‘ MARIE SIDNEY.’

The superficial education given to our grandmothers was the introduction of later times, and must be ascribed to the breaking up of all society during the Rebellion in the first instance ; and in the second to the indifference to literature, philosophy, and even to history, engendered during the vulgar rule of the three first Georges. Previously, however, to that era, no lady of condition could be deemed properly trained for her station except she were versed in English poetry, in theology, and even in some portion of classical learning. Thus the education of Mary Sidney was conducted with the view to make her an enlightened, agreeable, reflective woman ; able to take her place in the colloquies of the divine, as well as to shine in a court gala when she gave her hand to her partner to tread a measure. All politeness was taught her ; but true politeness, she was assured, could only be secured by mental cultivation, could only spring from a Christian courtesy. Such was the case in the middle of the sixteenth century, when Lady Mary was born.

But there was another cause of the great pre-eminence of this intellectual woman, even in an age of female excellence. She was blessed with a brother whose name is still uttered to all English boys of condition as an incentive to true glory. In the old gallery of Penshurst hangs a portrait of a fair young man, with a long, narrow face, with a peculiar quickness of eye and nobleness of brow. That is Sir Philip Sidney. Dates do not exactly show whether he was younger or older than his

sister. He was born in 1554, and received the name of Philip, one regrets to say, in compliment to Philip II. of Spain, the husband of Mary Tudor. His education was commenced at Shrewsbury, chosen perhaps from its vicinity to Wales, of which Sir Henry Sidney was at one time Lord President. He went to Christ Church, Oxford, when he was fifteen, studying afterwards at Cambridge: even then the academical celebrity of these two great universities being based on different studies, and the advantages, special to each, to be met with in them. It is related of the great pride of our nation, Mrs. Somerville, that she acquired her love for mathematics by being present at the instructions given by an eminent professor to her brother, Mr. Gregg. She used to sit by, working, and when the professor went away she wrote down all she had gathered into her comprehensive mind. To that mind the first taste, the propelling force, were thus given; and we acknowledge the greatness of her whom Sir James Mackintosh used playfully to call 'Queen of the Heavens.' In the same way Mary Sidney, it is probable, may have gleaned much of her knowledge, for it is evident that her brother regarded her as his intellectual companion; one who could appreciate his works, who could sympathise in his pursuits. They were, however, frequently separated. Every young man of rank and fortune at that day made the grand tour, but no one could do so without a licence from the sovereign. When he was eighteen, Philip Sidney obtained permission from Queen Elizabeth to go to France. Charles IX. then ruled over that country, and Sir Francis Walsingham was ambassador. To him Sir Philip had a strong recommendation from Dudley Earl of Leicester, his maternal uncle, and the favourite of Elizabeth; and, strange to say, Charles IX. took him, on that account, though an Englishman and a Protestant, into his household, and made him one of the gentlemen of his bedchamber.

Mary Sidney meantime was pursuing at home the studies which won her the following praise from Osborn, the historian of King James I.: 'She was that sister of Sir Philip Sidney to whom he addressed his "*Arcadia*," and of whom he had no other advantage than what he received from the partial bene-

volence of fortune in making him a man (which yet she did, in some judgments, recompense in beauty); her pen being nothing short of his, as I am ready to attest, having seen some incomparable letters of hers.' She won also a tribute from Spenser, who refers to her as

'The gentlest shepherdess that liv'd that day,
And most resembling, in shape and spirit,
Her brother dear.'

It is difficult to say at what period of her life she began that version of the Psalms which obtained the name of the 'Sydneyan Psalms,' and which are said to have been the joint production of Philip and Mary Sidney. But it appears probable that they were the effort of a later period—that of her married life. 'The ties of consanguinity,' as an historian expresses it, 'betwixt this illustrious brother and sister were strengthened by friendship, the effect of congenial sentiments, and similitude of manners.'

One of the results of Mary Sidney's muse, however, may have been the result of her comparative seclusion at Penshurst before she became the mistress of Wilton. 'A Pastoral Dialogue in praise of Astræa' was given to the world in Davison's 'Poetical Rhapsody.' Astræa was, of course, Queen Elizabeth. It was a tribute to that extraordinary woman and incomparable queen on the occasion of her visiting either Penshurst or Wilton, *which* is not known; and begins thus:—

Thenot. 'I sing divine Astræa's praise,
O Muses, help my wits to raise,
And heave my verses higher.'

Piers. 'Thou need'st the truth but plainly tell,
Which much I doubt thou canst not well,
Thou art so oft a liar.'

Again—

Thenot. 'Astræa may be justly said,
A field in flowery robe arrayed,
In seasons freshly springing.'

Piers. 'That spring indures but shortest time,
This never leaves Astræa's clime,
Thou liest, instead of singing.'

Thenot. 'Then Piers, of friendship tell me why,
My meaning true, my words should lie
And strive in vain to raise her?'

Piers. 'Words from conceit do onely rise,
Above conceit her honour flies,
But silence nought can praise her.'

The taste for versifying was increased by the companionship of Spenser, who was only two years younger than Philip Sidney. Connected with the great family of Spenser or Spencer of Althorpe, Edmund Spenser was among the earliest, the most distinguished, the most grateful friends of Philip Sidney. To him the great poet of the Elizabethan era dedicated his 'Shepherd's Calendar,' under the modest name of *Immerito*. Gabriel Harvey had introduced the two poets to each other. The one, Spenser, poor, ambitious, highly educated, was writhing under the pecuniary difficulties from which he never emerged: the other, Sidney, was in the full tide of fortune; in affluence, aided by powerful friends, with health and hope around him. Yet he forgot not the poor poet, improvident as well as poor: he introduced him to Dudley Earl of Leicester, by whom Spenser was employed in foreign missions. It is, however, still a matter of doubt to whom the honour of presenting Spenser to the queen is due—whether Raleigh performed that office, or whether to Sir Philip the merit is to be assigned. At all events Spenser was the associate both of Philip and of his sister, whom he couples together as we have seen. But the pursuits of Mary Sidney were interrupted, though, as it appears, not cut short by her marrying, which took place in 1676.

Previous to that event her brother returned from his travels: they had been both adventurous and improving. When the massacre of St. Bartholomew was perpetrated, he had taken refuge with Walsingham, the ambassador: he had visited Vienna, Hungary, and most of the Italian cities: yet he brought back to his home pure thoughts, high principles, and a blameless practice. His accomplishments were great: nevertheless, there must have been a strong family interest, to procure for him, at the age of twenty-two, the appointment of ambassador to the court of Vienna, to which he was accredited. So, after witnessing the nuptials of his sister, he again revisited the Continent. Mary, meantime, was transplanted to the almost princely magnificence of Wilton. Of some, indeed of many of the high-born girls of those days, it was the lot to leave the homes of affection, refinement, and intelligence, to become the wives of dry statesmen, of rough soldiers, or of mere hunting and

hawking nobles, or squires. But Mary Sidney was, in most respects, far more fortunate than the majority of young women. In all probability when she was united to Henry Earl of Pembroke she acted from her own inclination. It was consistent with the benevolence of her father's character to allow his children, in the most momentous affairs of their existence, the chance of happiness. But in this respect as in all others, Mary Sidney appears to have been felicitous, when she became the third wife of Henry, the second Earl of Pembroke:—in that character the leader of such society as aspired to intellectual eminence, and at the same time maintained a magnificence consistent with their rank.

In this respect the Herberts were unequalled, except, perhaps, by the Arundels. William Earl of Pembroke, the father of Henry, was one of the most important and magnificent characters of his time. It was then still in remembrance, how he had ridden to his mansion of Baynard Castle with a retinue of three hundred horsemen, a hundred of whom were gentlemen in suits of blue cloth, with chains round their necks, and badges, denoting a sort of bond or servitude, on their sleeves, which bore a dragon worked in gold. Neither did the heralds omit to proclaim what costly largesse there was at this great earl's funeral, when two thousand pounds were spent merely for mourning, everything else corresponding. It may, therefore, readily be conceived to how grand a pitch every arrangement for the living was raised when such an expenditure was appropriated to the dead.

Henry Earl of Pembroke, the husband of Mary Sidney, was, when she married him, childless, having been divorced from his first wife, the daughter of Grey Earl of Suffolk, and having lost his second. The union of Mary Sidney with this nobleman was, however, blessed by the birth of two sons.

She now attracted to Wilton all the illustrious characters of that great period. Of her appearance some portraits give an impression of a plain, long, and somewhat hard face with heavy features; a large, long nose, a small mouth, round which marked lines detracted from the sweetness of the countenance; fine arched eyebrows, and a sleepy, thoughtful eye. Her hair is

upraised from a low but broad forehead, and dressed in a thicket of tiny curls, like those of a well-kept poodle: above this intricate mass is a sort of hair-trimming, a lock rolled back and forming a frame to the forest beneath. The face is, on the whole, more intellectual than pleasing; the dress very stately, such as one may conceive her to have worn when receiving Queen Elizabeth, or going, with a sickened heart, when a widow, to the wild gaities patronized by Anne of Denmark. An enormous ruff of delicate lace, vandycked at the edges in a double row, stands out and shows her fair throat and neck, round which two rows of immense pearls are thrown. Over the long tight sleeves of her dress is a velvet mantle edged with minever, that dowager fur which seems to have been designed for queens and courts alone, and which all the dictates of etiquette have appropriated to their use. Two pear-shaped pearls appear beneath the hair, and the long, thin hand holds a Psalter.

In stately form, but in all sweetness and courtesy, did Mary Countess of Pembroke receive the guests who filled at times the picture galleries of Wilton. Here Raleigh, with lofty brow, over which a mass of black hair was closely cut square, so as to show that elevated forehead; Raleigh, with his wonderfully searching eyes, his long face, his slight moustache over his faultless mouth, his close-cut pointed beard; Raleigh, with his mind and fancy full, his talk of Ireland, then of Essex, of the Queen's last favour, or perchance of Spenser, or of this rare genius—'Will Shakspeare'—was ever a welcome guest, for he had befriended Spenser, and was esteemed by the long-absent, ever-deplored Philip. Here Sir John Harrington, the godson of Queen Elizabeth, talked, one may imagine, against the marriage of bishops, a point with him almost of monomania, but a prejudice, nevertheless, acceptable to the queen, his godmother; whom he had almost offended by his having received the order of knighthood from the Earl of Essex on the field of battle. Here, when secrets of state were to be wormed out, crept in he whom King James called his 'little beagle,' deformed Cecil Lord Salisbury, the son and successor of the great Burleigh. Cecil was crooked in mind as well as body. One cannot imagine him to have been a favourite at Wilton; one cannot but

portray Lady Pembroke, with her noble sentiments, uncorrupted by fortune's lavish gifts, shrinking from the minister who was envious of Essex and of Raleigh.

But there are associations still more precious with that time, that place, than those with the crooked-minded, crafty, hard-natured Cecil. Among the bondmen who attended on the great Earl William and his son Earl Henry, was Arthur Massinger, the father of the poet and dramatist, Philip. It is, indeed, probable, though not certain, that the author of the 'New Way to pay Old Debts' passed his childhood in the marble halls of Wilton; and that his father was bondman in that house there is no doubt. Shy, poor, somewhat democratic in his views, we must not picture to ourselves the humble poet at the great earl's table; in the lower or servants' hall more probably: but we may venture to conceive him sauntering in that noble park, by that reluctant water in which the airy bridge, the solid mansion, are clearly reflected. We may imagine him there—meditative, apart, abstracted: with a broad, perhaps ungraceful figure, and a noble yet disappointing head: noble, inasmuch as the forehead is magnificent; the eyes soft, kind, thoughtful; the nose well formed; but the mouth small, even to disproportion, shows weakness. We see him full, we may readily suppose, of anxious thoughts, for he was oftentimes obliged to pledge the unworked treasures of his brain—to pawn, to Hinchinbrook the theatrical pawnbroker, the ore before it was brought out, the play before it was written, to save himself from prison. We may fancy him too proud for confidence, too truthful to disguise, resting beneath the shade of those elms: or meditating, as the pellucid stream flows, on its little resemblance to his own turbid thoughts and adverse destiny.

Within doors, however, Ben Jonson may presume to enter and to abide. How lowly soever his fate, it was one of independence: his father was no bondman. The son, indeed, of a poor but honest parson, Jonson had, it is true, worked with the trowel, and carried probably a hod of mortar on his back. His mother, a woman of rare powers and spirit, married for her second husband a bricklayer: and Ben, as he was called everywhere, and doubtless at Wilton, had followed for some short

period his stepfather's calling. Nevertheless, he had been educated by Camden, the historian, at Westminster ; thence had he been to Cambridge, some say to St. John's ; but as necessity introduces us to strange company, so does she also, uncompromising fury as she is, bring us into contact with uncongenial employments.

Ben Jonson was, in truth, a far less interesting individual than the indigent, retiring Philip Massinger : yet Ben was a man certain to make a noise in the world ; with massive features ; a hanging brow shadowing the most searching of all eyes, though with a cast in them ; a fine forehead ; a complexion seamed and scarred by disease ; a great awkward, or, as he called it, ungracious form, which not even the tight-fitting doublet and plain white collar, turned down, of James's time, could reduce to proportion in our view. Then he has a loud, burly voice ; wit of the overbearing character ; he talks as if he were storming a citadel with his jokes ; his assaults are fearful. Yet is he a favourite at Wilton, and he well understands his hostess on whom he wrote the epitaph, even now so famed for its point.

He visits Wilton, however, as he visits other places, for a special purpose, that of affording amusement to the intellectual great. The masque, an entertainment long out of vogue, was the chief diversion of the rich and noble in the time of Elizabeth and James I. It was almost always acted by persons of the highest class : sometimes by royal personages : almost invariably by the fashionable and noble courtiers of the period. Dancing and music were introduced, and these were also performed by the high-born actors, who learnt and rehearsed their parts under the Master of the Revels. Lawes usually composed the airs to which the exquisite poetry of Ben Jonson was sung ; whilst the scenery, decorations, and dresses were contrived and executed by Inigo Jones. Certain great families copied the example of the court, and ordered masques to be written and *mise en scène* at their own country seats, calling in for their choruses the children of the Chapel Royal, who were regularly trained to take their parts in masques. At Wilton, therefore, at Belvoir Castle, at Whitehall, at Windsor, these charming but costly diversions were carried on sometimes at

the cost of more than a thousand pounds. In the time of his health and prosperity, Ben Jonson might be seen in the halls of these stately edifices, encouraging sometimes, but scolding more frequently. His voice might be heard in contest with Inigo, with whom he quarrelled, or in approval of Lawes or Lanière. Never was there such a green-room. Princes of the blood—ofttimes, indeed, Queen Anne—peers and peeresses, ministers and generals, all joined in the masque: all commended Jonson, all dreaded his ire, as he cast on them the one eye, which squinted most fearfully in his rage.

But, in the midst of all those court gaieties in which the Herbert family continually took a conspicuous part, the Countess of Pembroke's heart was untainted by the world. Amongst the most esteemed of her contemporaries was Dr. John Donne, that eminent divine and poet, whose life, as written by Izaak Walton, is one of the most beautiful pieces of biography in our language: Donne, although far more happy in his origin and circumstances than many of his brother poets, led a life of vicissitude. He was born, it is true, as Walton tells us, 'of good and virtuous parents:' his father being, the same writer adds, masculinely and lineally descended from an ancient family in Wales, his mother from Sir Thomas More. Like Pious Mirandulo, Donne was rather *born* 'than *made* by his study.' Even in his eleventh year he was thought to be fit for Oxford, when he entered into the small and ancient society called Hart Hall, now merged into Exeter College. Like Jeremy Taylor, Donne had at one time nearly fallen into the errors of Popery, of which persuasion his parents were. He set out in life with a resolution to adopt no other distinction than that of 'Christian:' but a careful examination of Father Bellarmin's works brought him a conviction that the Anglican Church was the purest, and to that he eventually and fervently devoted himself.

His secret and imprudent marriage to a niece of the Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, in whose family he acted as secretary; the anger and vengeance of Sir George More, the young lady's father; his dismissal from his post, with, indeed, this commendation, that the chancellor, in losing him, parted with a 'friend and secretary such as was fitter to serve a king than a sub-

ject;' his imprisonment for his secret marriage, and not only his but that of the friend who had given the young lady to him, and of the bridegroom's man, another friend also, were adversities which drew Donne from the world, and, in part, influenced him to take orders, leaving the profession of the law, into which he had entered. Strange, indeed, were the times in which an individual could obtain the imprisonment of a young man and his friends on account of a runaway marriage. This misfortune had the effect of stimulating Dr. Donne's exertions, as he thus intimates in one of his poems called 'The Will :—

' I give my reputation to those
That were my friends, my industry to foes ;
To schoolmen I bequeath my doubtfulness ;
To Nature all that I to rhyme have writ,
And to my company my wit,'

implying that it was his foes who had given him the incentive to work.

When the Countess of Pembroke was established at Wilton, Dr. Donne and his wife were living near Whitehall. He was cherished by the great, valued by the pious. The death of his wife was, however, a life-long trial of this good man : leaving him with seven young children, to whom he gave an assurance that he would never bring them under the subjection of a step-mother : and he kept his word ; ' Burying with his tears,' says old Izaak Walton, ' all his earthly joys in his most dear and deserving wife's grave, and betaking himself to a most retired and solitary life.' When, after her death, he first went out, it was to preach in St. Clement's Church, where she was buried. His text was taken from the prophet Jeremiah : ' Lo, I am the man that have seen affliction.' His congregation, touched, not only by the eloquence that was the delight of Charles I., but by the sorrowful preacher's sobs, were plunged into what Walton calls a ' companionable sadness.' Donne was said to have preached his own funeral sermon : and he certainly designed his own monument. With regard to the first there was a report that he was dead ; after which he appeared, spectre-like, in the pulpit of Lincoln's Inn, of which he was preacher, for the last time, like one risen from the dead. After, Izaak Walton relates, some faint pauses in his zealous prayer, he gave out his

text : 'To God the Lord belong the issues from death.' Many who saw his tears and heard his faint and hollow voice declared that they thought the text prophetically chosen, and that Dr. Donne had 'preached his own funeral sermon.' Whilst death hovered over him he was persuaded by his friend Dr. Fox to have his monument designed. Walton relates the singular execution of this strange idea in the following words. The monument thus planned is still to be seen in our great national cathedral of St. Paul ; it was executed by the famous Nicholas Stone.

'Dr. Donne sent for a carver to make for him in wood the figure of an urn, * * * and to bring with it a board of the just height of his body. * * * A choice painter was got to be in readiness to draw his picture, which was taken as followeth. Several charcoal fires being first made in his large study, he brought with him into that place his winding-sheet in his hand, and having put off all his clothes, had this sheet put on him, and so tied with knots at his head and feet, and his hand so placed, as dead bodies are usually fitted to be shrouded and put into their coffin or grave. Upon this urn he thus stood, with his eyes shut, and with so much of the sheet turned aside as might show his lean, pale, and death-like face, which was purposely turned toward the east, from whence he expected the second coming of his and our Saviour Jesus. In this posture he was drawn at his just height ; and when the picture was fully finished, he caused it to be set by his bedside, where it continued and became his hourly object till his death.'

Such was one of those able and excellent men of whom the reputation which the Countess of Pembroke had acquired for learning and piety drew around her. Her daily life was varied. it was neither continual dissipation nor seclusion. She entered into all the great subjects of the period ; she loved poetry ; she patronized poets : she could enjoy the wit of Ben Jonson, and not think that her pleasure in masques, or even in plays, could detract from her devotion one shade of warmth, or render her less a companion for the chastened, saintly, yet cheerful and benignant Donne. The human mind, like the body, requires a variety of ailments, and is susceptible of an infinitude of

pleasures. As Barrow says, we are meant for this world : we are sent here to live, and 'should not be always a-dying.'

Blessed with wealth, friends, high estate, and two sons, one of whom, William, was of rare promise, the Countess of Pembroke, one might apprehend, was too greatly endowed with the gifts of fortune for a poor mortal, whose nature can rarely withstand the incessant trials of prosperity any more than those equally perilous of a too unvarying adversity. But she had her trials in life to sustain.

Between her brother Philip and herself the tenderest affection not only subsisted before her marriage but continued to the close of his heroic life.

'Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to any thinness beat.'

Those lines of Dr. Donne's well express the perfect sympathy between the brother and sister; and yet it was the will of God that when they parted, Sir Philip going to the wars, that they should never meet again. Philip Sidney was one of the men who proved that high cultivation of mind enhances rather than weakens courage. He had at an early period signalised his skill in a tournament before Queen Elizabeth; he next asserted his honour by avenging an insult from Vere, Earl of Oxford, in a tennis-court. It was after this occurrence that he withdrew to Wilton, and there composed the beautiful fragment which he called 'Arcadia,' and which he dedicated to his sister. It was whilst he was without any public employment that Sidney married: his choice fell on the beautiful and intellectual daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. Ben Jonson has written the following lines on this lady:—

'TO MISTRESS PHILIP SYDNEY.

'I must believe some miracles still be,
When Sidney's name I hear, or face I see
For Cupid, who at first took vain delight
In mere out forms untill he lost his sight,
Hath changed his soul, and made his object you,
Where, finding so much beauty met with virtue,
He hath not only gained himself his eyes,
But, in your love, made all his servants wise.'

Sidney's felicity now seemed at its acme. Knighted by Queen Elizabeth—by no means lavish of her distinctions—he was so desirous of fame that he proposed to accompany Sir Francis Drake in one of his expeditions against the Spanish settlements of America. But Elizabeth, hearing of this design, stopped it peremptorily. The thirst for military renown, however, soon impelled the valiant Sir Philip to a new field. He was enthusiastically Protestant. All true English hearts grieved for the oppressions in the Low Countries, and Elizabeth resolved to try her powerful help to succour them. This time the hero was gratified : and he was intrusted with the government of Flushing. He served in this campaign with the young and brave Prince Maurice, the son of Elizabeth of Bohemia, and under the Earl of Leicester, whose incapacity as a general was soon evident to Sidney. One night in the month of September he was sent with a detachment, which fell in with a convoy despatched by the enemy to Zutphen. A fierce action ensued. The gallant Sidney had a horse shot under him : he mounted another, and charged the enemy with all the ardour of a hero. A musket-bullet at that instant was aimed at him : he received it in his knee: the bone was broken : the ball penetrated deeply into the thigh. He was conveyed from the field to Leicester's camp. On the way, being very faint and thirsty from loss of blood, he called for water. He was about to drink, when he happened to see a poor soldier in all the agonies of a mortal wound. He immediately gave him the draught, saying those memorable words : 'This man's necessity is even greater than mine is.' He was carried to Arnheim. Hopes were entertained of his recovery, but on the 17th of October, 1585, mortification having set in, he expired. His death was noble as his life. He had much to resign. To him the world presented many objects of affection—his sister, his wife, his country. But he tranquilly placed himself in the hands of Him who gave him all, and, in a spirit truly worthy to be termed Christian, he prepared himself for the last hour. Thus, at the age of thirty-two, died the good and great Sir Philip Sidney.

The states of Zealand begged to have his body, that they might inter it with honour and reverence ; but Queen Elizabeth

called the poor remains of her valued warrior home, and he was buried with a public and solemn funeral in St. Paul's. No inscription marked his grave, but the hearts of all his countrymen mourned him : and King James I. composed an elegy on the young and accomplished warrior. His sister undertook a task dear to her heart, but not without its difficulties. Sir Philip had left her his '*Arcadia*' in scattered fragments. She collected and united these fragments, and carefully revising the whole, published what has thence been often styled '*The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*.' The poem is no longer suited to the taste of an age which requires strong excitement, and which disclaims sentiment. In its abstract ideas and calm lofty tone, its exquisite occasional beauty, its noble lessons of morality, the '*Arcadia*' will recall to the reader, even with all its antiquated diction, some of Tennyson's poetry, which in its lofty sentiments and faith seems to breathe the spirit of Sidney.

After his death, life must have lost much of its charm for his earliest friend and sister. She wrote an elegy on her lamented companion, which is printed in Spenser's '*Astrophel*.' Her interest had, however, a valid source in the education of her two sons, William, who succeeded his father, and became Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery. William inherited his mother's abilities, and emulated the talents and reputation of his uncle : he became the most popular nobleman of his time. Magnificent in his bounty and hospitality, a graceful speaker, full of wit, learning, and courtesy, he had but one failing, and that was perhaps the fault of the age, and to be in some respects excused by a most ill-judged and infelicitous marriage : 'for he paid,' as Lord Clarendon observes, 'too dear for his wife's fortune, by taking her person into the bargain.' Married to the Lady Mary Talbot, this nobleman was one of the richest of English peers, and his fortune was much increased by his wife's inheritance ; yet he was so lavish that even those vast resources were insufficient for his expenses. In the amours in which he unhappily indulged, he was more attracted by intellectual endowments than by beauty. That he was the slave of his passions was peculiarly inexcusable in one who most highly appreciated virtue, who comprehended

all her blessings, all the peace she bestows. To him, the poet's friend as well as patron, Ben Jonson dedicated what he styles the 'ripest of his studies,' his 'Epigrams,' and by him Jonson was employed to write that epitaph on the earl's mother which has been deemed a model for similar compositions.

Two anecdotes are related respecting the death of this nobleman. Some years previously to that event, his nativity had been calculated in the presence of a Mr. Allen of Gloucester Hall. Lord Pembroke died on his fiftieth birthday, the very day which the astrologer had assigned for his decease ; and had he not eaten a very 'full and cheerful supper,' it might have been supposed that imagination had lent its powerful aid in producing the result, as was, in all probability, the case with the bad Lord Lyttelton. Another curious coincidence is recorded. On the very evening of his death, General Morgan and some other officers were sitting at Maidenhead with some of the earl's dependants. One of the company drank a health to his lordship, who, he thought, would be very merry, for he had outlived the day which his tutor Sandford had prognosticated would be that of his death. He was secure now, for it was his birthday, and he had outlived the prophecy. On the following morning news came of the earl's death.

Still another occurrence startled the superstitious. The body was of course to be embalmed : the surgeons prepared to commence operations. On one of these making an incision with his knife, the bystanders were horror struck : one of the cold hands of the ghastly corpse was instantly lifted up ! This anecdote is stated by several writers. It rests also on a tradition which still exists in the family of the Earl of Pembroke, nor is it altogether incredible. Those who have courage to read a most remarkable article on premature interments in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' (the original edition), will find that such events as being buried *too soon* occurred not unfrequently in former times, owing to the inadequacy or carelessness of medical men, or to the fear of retaining a corpse in the house after death from infectious distempers. In the dead-house at Munich, where corpses are laid, and where they have a bell attached to the finger to summon the sentinel who parades the garden in

case of recovered consciousness, there have been well-authenticated instances of that bell being sounded, to the horror of the unhappy watchman, and to partial though not perfect consciousness being restored. There is a tradition in the Clop-ton family, living near Stratford-on-Avon, of resuscitation after death. It was when the plague raged, that a young daughter of that old race was interred in the family vault at Stratford. In a short time her brother died also. On opening the vault, the body of the young lady was found out of the coffin, on the pavement of the vault, and the terrible conviction came that she had crawled out in hopes of reaching the door of the vault. And this tale seems to be well authenticated.

It is not, however, required to show that which safer records prove abundantly. The Earl of Pembroke is said to have died of apoplexy. May it not have been catalepsy, which stimulates death, and lasts for a considerable time?

Philip, the younger son of Mary Countess of Pembroke, was the blot upon the scutcheon from which no family had till his time so completely escaped as the loyal, generous, valiant Herberts. He was created Baron Herbert of Solarlands and Earl of Montgomery: he was made chamberlain to King Charles I. and Chancellor of Oxford. Yet he meanly changed sides, and was employed to offer to his unfortunate sovereign such terms as would wholly strip him of his prerogative. It was on this occasion that Charles lost his usual self-control. 'No, Phil, by ——, not for an hour.' This Philip actually renounced his rank as a peer to sit in the Parliament over which the monarch no longer presided.

The Countess of Pembroke survived her husband twenty years: 'Happy,' observes Hartley Coleridge, 'as the praises of grateful poets could make her—happy in her fair reputation, and it is to be hoped in the duteous attendance of her elder son—and happy in dying too soon to see her younger offspring

“—————Hold a wing
Quite from the flight of all his ancestors.”

She had another source of happiness. Her intellect, which had shone in gay assemblies, and had procured for her such a society as even Wilton can never hope to assemble again within

its halls, was directed to the service of her Creator. Of her version of the Psalms, Daniel, poet laureate to Queen Elizabeth, writes—

Those hymns which thou didst consecrate to heaven,
Which Israel's singer to his God did frame,
Unto thy voyage eternity hath given,
And makes thee dear to him from whence they came.'

Upon which Hartley Coleridge remarks 'that it is a pity they are not authorized to be sung in churches, for the present versions are a disgrace and a mischief to the Establishment.'

The Countess of Pembroke lived, when in London, in Aldersgate Street, where she died in the year 1621—fortunately for herself before the troubles of the Rebellion had even been prognosticated. The locality in which she breathed her last was then both fashionable as a residence, and picturesque. The street was entered by a fine gate, said to have been rebuilt in 1617, when the ancient one was taken down by Gerard Christmas, the architect of old Northumberland House. James I. had entered London by the former gate, an event which was commemorated by inscriptions on the new erection, on which the heads of several of the regicides were set. The structure suffered in the Fire of London, but was again rebuilt; afterwards it was taken down, being first sold for the sum of ninety-one pounds.

This gate, over which John Day, a printer, lived in Elizabeth's time, led to one of the most spacious and uniform streets in the metropolis. The buildings were well placed at convenient distances, or, to use a modern term, detached. Thanet House, the work of Inigo Jones, is now a dispensary. It was once the habitation of Lord Shaftesbury, the 'Ashley' of the Cabal. A little higher up the infamous Maitland Duke of Lauderdale, one of that party, also resided. Great and small tenanted the houses in Aldersgate Street: John Taylor, the water-poet, set out thence to walk penniless to Scotland; and John Milton chose Aldersgate Street for his abode, on account of the pretty garden that his house, situated at the end of an entry, commanded. Here he took an handsome tenement: here he could find room for his books: and quiet, for Aldersgate Street was

too grand for petty noises : here he studied in a tranquillity we find it hard to conceive in the present day as having ever blessed the regions of Aldersgate : and here the sister of Sir Philip Sidney expired in a good old age.

Osborne, apologizing, as it were, for having praised this accomplished 'Queen of Society' too warmly, says: 'Lest I should seem to trespass against truth, which few do unsuborned, as I protest I am, except by her rhetoric, I shall leave the world her epitaph, in which the author doth manifest himself a poet in all things but untruth—

' Underneath this sable herse
Lies the subject of all verse,
SIDNEY'S sister, PEMBROKE'S mother ;
Death ! ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.'





LA MARQUISE DE MAINTENON.

A Brave Protestant Soldier.—A Romantic Tale.—Born in a Prison.—Francoise in Pawn.—A Stanch Little Protestant.—Conversion.—Wit in Six Lessons.—The Merry Cripple.—The Queen's Patient.—Scarron Accepted.—Easy Settlements.—The Buffoon's Society.—Ninon.—A Company of Wits.—Respectability and Virtue.—Death in Life.—La Veuve Scarron.—Le Grand Monarque.—Supplanting.—The King's Wife.

BORN in a prison, bred in poverty, the widow of a cripple, the wife of a king, respectable yet not virtuous, pious yet not religious, the daughter of a needlewoman ruled France in its grandest days. Because she was free from the vices of her age, she was hated. Whether there were any other reason for ill-will towards her, we shall see. As ruler of France—for she was neither queen nor mistress—her name is historical, her life was political, and she was much more than a 'Queen of Society.' When she reaches that point, we shall make our bow and retire from the august presence. Our business is with her as a 'Queen of Society,' which she was before her accession. Her life is the most romantic that the life of any woman can be, who has never known what it is to love—so it will have its interest.

I am not going to follow a French biographer of this lady, and trace her family back to the Romans. It must suffice to say that the D'Aubigné, D'Aubigny, or D'Aubignac family is one of the oldest in France; that it was to be found in Berry, Poitou, and Guienne, and may, possibly, be represented by some of our English Daubeney's; and that it gave to its country two celebrated people, of whom our Marquise was one, and the other rejoiced in the classic prænomen of Agrippa.

This Agrippa, whose full name was Théodore-Agrippa, was a brave Protestant soldier, and a man who feared neither king

nor kaiser. Born in 1550, he is said to have translated Plato's 'Crito,' at the age of eight, and might have been a scholar if his Huguenot zeal had not made him a man of war. He had a romantic life, as all the D'Aubignés had ; but as we are not writing his memoirs, but his granddaughter's, it shall suffice to say that he attached himself to the cause of Henri of Navarre, who had made him a gentleman of his bed-chamber, governor of Maillezais, and vice-admiral of Guienne and Brittany successively. He spoke his mind out to the king, as if he had been his tutor rather than his servant, and Henri, who brooked this freedom a long time, eventually got disgusted with it. D'Aubigné was the friend and companion in arms of Turenne and others, and himself an intrepid devil-may-care warrior. When the day of the Huguenots had gone by, he took refuge in Geneva, wrote a 'Histoire Universelle,' in which Henri III. was abused, and which, therefore, the parliament ordered to be burnt, penned his own memoirs and several other pieces, and died, in 1630, at the ripe old age of eighty, conscious of having done his best after his own fashion.

His son Constans was a reprobate of the first water, and therefore the ladies took care of him. He was always in trouble, and they were always getting him out of it. He rewarded their affections by murdering one—so it was said—and treating another as ill as he could. His, too, was a romantic story, and as it affected the early life of Madame de Maintenon, his daughter, it must be briefly glanced at.

He began his scampish career, as most scamps do, by getting into debt. This was by no means his only or his worst fault. As a young man, he had every vice that the young can have, and he was soon to follow them with crimes. Dear creature ! he was just the man to captivate the gallant ladies of the day, and one of them, a rich widow, Madame le Baronne de Chate-laillon, offered him her hand and fortune, both of which he readily accepted.

Good things, too easily gotten, are proverbially despised ; and the rich widow soon found that leap-year offers are not productive of much happiness. The scamp abandoned her, and she, to recall him, took to the unwise plan of making him

jealous. She succeeded a little too well. Her lover, whether real or pretended, and herself were both murdered, and suspicion naturally rested on the husband, though he could not be convicted of the crime. Those were convenient days for criminals, and for a time Constans (or Constant, as the name is also written) was actually received at court, but the relations of the murdered lady succeeded at last in getting him thrown into prison.

Now it is due to truth to say that the story of this first imprisonment, and its romantic consequences, has been disputed and even positively denied. Still it is not refuted, which is quite another matter ; and we cannot enter into the arguments, and as, *entre nous*, we love a romantic tale, we will at least give the reader the advantage of it. The governor, then, of the prison of Château-Trompette, at Bordeaux, into which our scamp is said to have been thrown, was a M. de Cardillac, a relative of the Duc d'Epéron, and having for a wife a member of the great family of Montalembert. Cardillac had a daughter, young, and of course lovely, who, as the widow had done before, fell in love with Constans, and visited him in his cell. Constans was not the man to neglect an opportunity, ruined the poor girl first, and then induced her to manage his escape. This she did ; and it is a consolation to add that Constans married her as soon as they were free. There is no doubt that she loved him ardently, with an affection such as only woman can feel, which forgave every fault, every crime, and which endured in spite of ill-treatment, indifference, and misery. Jeanne de Cardillac was, in fact, a woman of most loveable character. She devoted herself to her husband, and she brought up her children in the best way that poverty and misery permitted. The story goes that the couple fled to America ; that after a time the husband abandoned his young wife, returned to France, and was again thrown into the same prison ; that she followed him, obtained leave to be imprisoned with him, got him removed to Niort, and there, in a cell, gave birth, in 1635, to a daughter, who was christened Françoise, and who afterwards ruled France through France's king.

The misery in which this famous woman began life can

scarcely be described. The imprisoned family was reduced almost to starvation, for they had no money by which to extract food from their gaolers. The husband, sick and starving, lay on the stone floor; a boy of a few years old was whining for food in a miserable cradle, and the poor mother supplied by turns her husband and her children with the only nourishment she could give them, from her own breast. They were all on the point of starving, when Madame de Villette, a worthy sister of Madame d'Aubigné, heard of their plight, visited them, and insisted on carrying away the young child to be properly nursed in her own house.

But the mother's heart bled at the separation from her child, and when restored to health, she claimed her again. Madame de Villette was forced to give her up, and thus the famous De Maintenon passed her earliest days in the precincts of a prison. She played and romped with the gaoler's little daughter, doubtless unconscious that she was deprived of her liberty; and, as a proof that her poor mother never forgot her own birth, it is related that when the child of the turnkey, who had a pocketful of sous, twitted her companion with having none, the little Françoise drew up proudly as a duchess, and replied, 'It is true I am poor, but I am a lady, and you are not.'

Madame d'Aubigné, though a prisoner, never relaxed in her efforts to obtain her husband's release. She applied to all her friends, and petitioned Richelieu, who brusquely told her that the sooner he ridded her of such a husband the better for her. Poor woman! she loved him to madness. However, she succeeded at last, and the family set sail, on his liberation, for America. On the voyage the little Françoise was so ill that she was supposed to be dead. Her brutal father, tired of his wife's sobbing, wanted to throw the body overboard. Madame d'Aubigné asked leave to kiss her infant once more, and placing her hand on the child's heart, declared that it was beating still, and thus saved the future Madame de Maintenon from the waves. When the king's wife in after years related this story to the Bishop de Metz, he replied, like a well-bred ecclesiastic, 'Madame, on ne revient pas de si loin pour peu de chose.'

In the island of Martinique, whither the family went, there

were happier days after all their misery; and Madame d'Aubigné, who had gone through so much, now educated her son and daughter with much care and good sense, until, in 1646-7, the death of her wretched husband left them once more in poverty. The poor widow saw nothing for it but to return to France and claim the aid of her friends; and as she could not pay her debts, she was actually forced to leave her daughter behind as a hostage, hoping to be able to procure the amount when she arrived in her native country. This hope was vain, and the little Françoise might have long remained in pawn if the creditors had not got tired of keeping her. The judge of the place took the child in pity, and sent her off to France. Poor Françoise seemed to have come into the world only to be a plague, and for some time no one could or would keep the future Maintenon. Her great-aunt Montalembert, to whom she was first despatched, would have nothing to do with her. Her mother could not afford to maintain her, and it was only the worthy Madame de Villette, who had once rescued the family from starvation, who would support her. This lady was a stanch Calvinist, and inspired the young girl with an affection for the religion which her grandfather had fought for. But Madame d'Aubigné soon repented of having 'endangered her child's salvation,' and took her away again from this kind aunt to place her with another, who was a brute, but a Romanist. This was Madame de Neuillant, who undertook to make her little relative a faithful believer.

At this period Françoise was a sturdy heretic. She refused to accompany her mother to mass; and when Madame d'Aubigné said to her, 'Then you do not love me,' replied perty, 'I love God more.' When to mass she was compelled to go, the little Puritan turned her back on the altar, laughed at the elevation of the host, and behaved in such a manner that her mother boxed her ears. The young heretic turned to her the other cheek. 'Strike!' she said boldly; 'it is good to suffer for one's faith.'

Madame de Neuillant probably felt that she should deserve the crown of a saint if she managed to convert this young Calvinist, but did not take the right means to do so. After calling

in the curé, whom the child answered by appealing to the Bible, after caressing and petting and arguing to no purpose, this charming Romanist determined to treat her young relative as one of the servants. Then the future wife of Louis XIV. might be seen in a morning assisting the coachman to groom the horses, or following a flock of turkeys, with her breakfast in a basket, and on her face a little *loup* to protect her complexion (for Madame de Neuillant was a complete Frenchwoman, and remembered that the young heretic was her relation), or combing the hair of the able-bodied peasant who took care of her at home. In after years, when made *Dame d'Atours* (tire woman) to the dauphine, she remembered this last circumstance, and declared herself to be a qualified comber of hair. Fortunately, perhaps, for the young girl, who was very pretty, a peasant-boy fell in love with her, and pressed his suit so warmly, that Madame de Neuillant, discovering the affair, sent her off to the convent of the Ursulines at Niort. Here were fresh attempts to make a Romanist of her, but all with the same success, till one of the sisters, somewhat cleverer than the rest, took her in hand. It is a curious point in Madame de Maintenon's character that kindness had no effect upon her, but argument always some. She was not old enough or learned enough to resist for long those specious reasonings with which Romanists so well understand how to support the mysteries of their religion, and she gave in so far as to attend mass and even receive the communion. But when the good sisters had got her to this point they felt that they had done their duty—they had saved a soul, and were not inclined to look after the body that encased it. So, after keeping her for some time gratuitously, they wrote to her mother that they could do so no longer. In after years she took care to pay these women every penny she had cost them; and when she told the story to her own establishment at St. Cyr, used to add: 'My children, let us always do good; it is rarely forgotten by men, but never by God.' This was really a Christian view to take of the zealous nuns' conduct.

At this period her mother, Madame d'Aubigné, was supporting herself by needlework at Paris, and it devolved on Madame

de Neuillant to take care of the daughter, who was sufficiently pretty to make her proud of having her in her house. Madame d'Aubigné was now engaged in a lawsuit for the recovery of an estate which her abandoned husband had alienated in payment of debts. The anxiety was too much for the poor workwoman—for such she was—and in 1649 she succumbed at last, after a life of struggles and misery, leaving to her daughter no heritage but the advice 'to fear everything from men, and hope everything from God.'

A poor orphan, Françoise was now left dependent on the mercies of Madame de Neuillant, and though no longer forced to take care of turkeys or groom the horses, she still felt the odiousness of her position. This lady saw in the promising beauty of her young charge an opening to a good match, and therefore consented to place her with a master of manners.

Good luck! a master of manners! Was there ever such a professor under the sun? Are manners to be taught by a master? There have been hundreds, and there are hundreds still. Turveydrop is by no means a peculiar instance. In France, at this time, young ladies were educated by elderly gentlemen with a view solely to their shining in society; they were taught not only what to do, and what to avoid doing, but even the art of wit, for in those days it was an art as easily acquired as that of fencing, dancing, or any other elegant accomplishment. Wit was the first accomplishment of society, and wit must be learnt where it was not innate. It was no more to be expected that a young lady should make an apt repartee without being taught, than that she should sit down to a piano and improvise a melody.

The gentleman who undertook this office was a noted wit-trainer. Madame de Lesdiguières, whom he had educated, had said to him, 'I want to be witty.' 'Madame,' he had replied, 'you shall be so.' This ancient Turveydrop was the Chevalier Marquis de Méré, an old gentleman of good family, half philosopher, half courtier, who reduced every principle to what is called 'decency of feeling and delicacy of manners.' He composed dialogues and polite fables for the use of his pupil, and taught her what, with her strong Calvinistic tendencies, she

may have wanted, the art of being charming. He could not, however, resist the untaught graces of his pupil, and even fell in love with her, though, of course, without success. He was proud of having such a pretty disciple, and, wherever he went, heralded her as the *ne plus ultra* of fascination. In this way she obtained a welcome into society, which her poverty and dependent situation would have otherwise rendered doubtful.

Among other houses to which Madame de Neuillant now took her promising *protégée*, was that of the poor crippled buffoon, Scarron. This man was an abbé, without having taken orders. At an early age he had been attacked with a disease which doubled his legs up to his chest, and obliged him to write on a desk supported by iron bars close to his face. His figure was often compared to the letter Z. Scarron had brought his maladies upon himself by a most irregular life of self-indulgence, yet he never complained. His disposition was naturally melancholy, yet the very causes which might have fostered it, turned its current in the opposite direction; and the more he was afflicted, the merrier he became. There are ample instances of such anomalies, but Scarron was perhaps the most extraordinary of them all. His mirth carried him through to the last, as long as he was in company; and on his death-bed, when he saw his friends shedding tears, more or less sincere, he jerked up his head and cried, 'You cannot weep half so much as I have made you laugh!'

Poor Scarron had the best heart in the world, and not the worst head. True, he was not famous for gratitude; but the fact is, that he saw the ridiculous too strongly in his friends to let them escape his shafts. He was the first to introduce the fashion of burlesque into France, and he burlesqued everything and everybody, including himself. His conversation was utterly unfit for polite ears, and his works are quite unreadable in the present day. But coarseness was only a foible in those times, and, if wit supported it, was more admired than condemned. It is not our purpose to give here a sketch of the life of this extraordinary man, who will sit for his portrait in another volume. It must suffice to say that he was the wonder, the buffoon, the recognised fool and wit of Parisian society

at that day, and that, with all his faults, he had many good qualities.

Scarron had a benefice in his capacity of abbé, but it was not rich enough to keep him. He therefore petitioned, as everybody of any pretension did in those days, for a pension, and when asked what office he, a cripple, could possibly fill, replied, 'Le Malade de la Reine.' His wit, his works, and his *mots* got him the appointment, though it was quite a new one in any court. His amusing talents brought him all the best society in Paris. Though poor enough to depend on his works for any addition to his fortune, which he spent rapidly and with a reckless hand, he still managed to keep open house in the evenings for all the courtiers and great people who chose to visit him. Scarron's house was, in short, the great centre of all the society of Paris that would not be bored with the stiffness of the court. It was, therefore, just the place at which to introduce a 'penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree' and a pretty face for her fortune; and such was Françoise d'Aubigné.

Madame de Neuillant, anxious to make a match for her charge, introduced her at Scarron's. The first time she went there, her dress was too short (for she was too poor to get a suitable one); and when she found herself among all the *grandes dames* of Paris, dressed within an inch of their lives, she felt so ashamed of her appearance that she burst into tears. The old cripple was touched, endeavoured to reassure her, and felt the first impression of tenderness which perhaps he had ever known. This anxiety about her appearance accompanied Françoise through life. She was not handsome enough to be proud, nor ugly enough to be vain, and she was never satisfied with herself. She was, however, a pretty girl at this period, but her beauty was not of the highest nor even the most pleasing type. The face was too broad above, too tapering towards the chin; the nose, though well formed and graceful, was not beautiful; the eyes, very far apart, had more of sense than depth; there was firmness in the mouth, yet a certain *bonhomie*—if such an expression can be applied to a woman—in the expression. When we add to this a brilliant complexion, and soft, fair hair, which clustered round her sensible but unmelting brow, we can easily

imagine that her friends thought her charming and her enemies disagreeable.

She left a deep impression on the poor paralytic, who, making the best of his state, laughed at it, at everybody, and at everything, and amused the whole world of healthy Paris with his laughter, unhealthy as he was. She had also a common friend—what more valuable in such affairs?—a Madame de St. Hermant, to whom she wrote frequently, and in confidence, and who occasionally read her letters to the wit. On one occasion Scarron exclaimed on hearing one of them, ‘Here is a girl as careful to conceal her wit as the rest of her sex are forward to display it: is it at Martinique she has learnt to write thus elegantly?’ He soon discovered that the poor girl was not happy in her dependent situation, and it was suggested to him that he might rescue her from this position by offering marriage. He did so, and, perhaps much to his surprise, was accepted. It must, at any rate, have been to everybody else’s surprise, for Scarron was notoriously the Pantaloon of French society. He was accustomed to be looked upon as a miserable creature, who yet had fun enough to amuse those who were more fortunate. And fun he certainly had, and amusement enough for the denizens of Louis’s court, who were not particular as to refinement. Indeed, Scarron was famous—or infamous—for his coarseness, the dirtiness of his jokes, the nastiness of his stories. He was a talking Rabelais, and might have discoursed ‘Tristram Shandy,’ from beginning to end in easy speeches.

The match naturally excited considerable wonderment. Here was a young and pretty girl joining her fate, of her own will, to an old crippled *débauchée*, utterly worn out by his wicked ways, and overcome by paralysis.

All this the young Françoise must have known before she accepted such an offer as that of the buffoon of Paris. Yet she did accept it. There was, no doubt, much in Scarron’s character that was loveable, in spite of his vices. Every man who can love is in his way worthy to be loved. It is only those who care for nothing but money who can be detested by women of real feeling though their tents were bound with gold. Mdlle. d’Aubigné had no such idea in uniting herself with poor

Scarron. She may not have loved him, probably she did not love him; but she had great pity for his infirmities, and a certain admiration for his wit. In a word, she did what hundreds of girls do daily; accepted the last man she was expected to take, just the very man whom everybody thought she would either hate or despise; and the fair young girl married the licensed buffoon in the year 1651.

There was not much fortune on either side to cause any apprehension of disagreement as to settlements. When asked by the notary who prepared the contract what he should put down as the young lady's property, Scarron replied, 'Four pounds a year, one pair of modest eyes, a fine figure, one pair of good hands, and plenty of mind.' Whether the limb of the law entered these articles we are not told, but we may be sure that it was with unmoved gravity that he proceeded to put the same question relative to the dowry which Scarron was to give his wife. 'Immortality,' replied the wit. 'The names of the wives of kings die with them, but that of *Scarron's* wife will live for ever.' If he really did make this speech, it is curious to note how exactly his prophecy has been reversed. The lady in question *is* remembered by the name she bore as the king's wife, and she *is not* remembered by that of Scarron, which in after years she attempted to obliterate entirely.

The strange buffoon behaved very pleasantly on the occasion. He told her that he saw but one alternative; if she did not marry, she must go into a convent, and he offered to pay the entrance-money for her; if she did marry, it could only be with some one who had an utter contempt for money, and could consent to unite with a penniless girl—a step which is almost a crime in France. In a word, she might choose between a cripple and a convent—and she chose the former. We English, perhaps, can understand and forgive this choice of the fair young girl. Such matches, though contrary to the law of heaven, do take place repeatedly in this country. I have known a lady—nay, two, or three—of youth and attractive appearance, married to men not only much their seniors, but in a state of health which rendered the matrimonial vow a mere mockery. For a time they have been happy, indeed; but in after years

a trying restlessness has come over them, and not the greatest affection and the utmost devotion to a patient with the name of a husband were sufficient to make up for a marriage which was no marriage. It may even be asked whether such matches are not in their way as heinous as those which dispense with the ceremony and sacred vows of matrimony altogether.

It may well be a matter of surprise that Madame Scarron, as she now was, retained that virtue for which she has become celebrated, under such circumstances and in such an age. Doubtless, her early Protestant education had a great weight in keeping her in the path of duty. But the wife of Scarron must have had her trials. The society at his house was of the most mixed description: never was there a time, except this and the days of ancient Athens, if even then, when notoriously degraded characters were admitted into so-called 'respectable' circles, and met with no scorn. We can understand that the court ladies under Louis XIV. had no stones—not even a pebble or two—to throw at such creatures as Ninon de l'Enclos; but that a virtuous woman, or one who was in her own conduct irreproachable, should have not only admitted her, but formed a firm and lasting friendship with her, seems almost incomprehensible. Yet so it was, and this is the reason that, while according Madame Scarron the meed of respectability, we cannot in good conscience call her a strictly virtuous woman. No virtuous woman tolerates the openly profligate in their own sex, whatever they may do for men. There is, indeed, as a rule, too little pardon accorded by women who have overcome the temptation to those who have not overcome it. Men may forgive or pity, since men have been first to blame; but women have no compassion in these matters: they ostracise the victim, and destroy all hope of her return. Ninon could not complain that she was debarred from a chance of becoming respectable. She was bad, not only from circumstances, but from actual inclination. No woman ever served the devil so faithfully or so remorselessly. Neither age nor even decay could terrify her. She managed in some marvellous manner to preserve her beauty, in spite of profligacy; and when she died at eighty was almost as beautiful as when she first erred

at eighteen. She was the destruction of the flower of the youth of France ; and whatever we may feel of pity for so beautiful a creature, ruined by an early attachment, we cannot deny that she was the very representative of hell upon earth, in her later days, and well deserved a pension from the Enemy. With this woman the wife of Scarron not only put up, but was intimate. The other members of the set were neither immaculate nor even respectable. Scarron had a reputation for fun, which drew people of all classes and all sentiments to his house. Poor as they were (and of their poverty an idea can be formed from the story that at supper one day the servant whispered to her, 'Madame, tell the company another story, for we have no joint to-day,') it was a distinction to be admitted to their rooms, and one, too, not within the reach of princes. Scarron and his wife would not be bored ; they would be surrounded by the lively, the clever, and the agreeable, while the great and the wealthy might go elsewhere. Thus their society was made up of various social elements, but of only one set of people—the amusing. The conversation was neither pedantic nor commonplace. Before his marriage, Scarron himself had given to it a disgustingly licentious tone. His young wife soon corrected this, and is said to have improved his mind to an extent which is even traceable in his writings, those published after 1651 being less obscene than the rest. The talk was naturally more or less learned, after the fashion of the day, but it seems to have been free from mere pedantry. Though Mdlle. de Scudéry was generally one of the party, they managed to exclude that high flown classical style which marked out the Blue-stockings. Though Ménage, with his wonderful memory and perpetual pedantry was to be found here, the learning was introduced more as an accessory than for display. There was an ample supply of literary men, song writers like Montreuil and Marigny ; poets represented by Charleval ; Hénault, the translator of 'Lucretius,' and many others ; for men of the world, there were the elegant De Grammont, the Abbé Têtu, the pet of the ladies ; the hideous Pelisson, whom Mademoiselle de Scudéry had made the hero of her twelve-volume novels ; ~~the~~ Marquis de la Sablière, and many of the gayest courtiers

Then the Duchesse de Lesdiguières had here an opportunity for displaying that wit which her master, le Chevalier de Méré, had undertaken to impart to her; Madame de Sévigné, always amiable and charming, the Comtesse de la Suze, the Marquise de la Sablière, and, in short, the principal lady-wits of the day, were among the guests at Scarron's.

But though his wife may have purified, a little, the mind of Scarron, she does not seem to have thought it at all necessary to purge her society. The least reputable ladies of a very disreputable court were freely admitted, and here a woman so strictly virtuous as Madame de Sévigné was not ashamed to be jostled by one so notoriously licentious as Ninon de l'Enclos. Yet Madame Scarron was not wholly indifferent as to character, and more than one instance is recorded where she endeavoured by advice or assistance to save that of her friends. She herself was more than once made the object of addresses; and so unusual was virtue among the fashionable women of her day, so completely was she surrounded by the worst in Paris, that the world could not believe she was innocent, and slanders were circulated, which, of course, it has ever since given trouble to refute. Horace Walpole, who lived before she died, speaks of her evidently as if he thought she had at some time or other been *galante*; and whether her marriage with the king was too strictly kept secret, or from whatever cause, the idea has sufficiently got about that she was not always without reproach. Some of her biographers have taken up the task of her defence; and as the subject is not one we should care to investigate very narrowly, we may be content with adopting the commonly-received opinion, and believe that, whatever other faults she may have had, she was free from that which degraded the women with whom she associated.

It is always a subject of wonder to me how long men and women are permitted to live when really half-dead. I have often proposed to myself, as a theme for a Bridgewater Treatise, the possible utility of the life of a toad which for years unnumbered and unnumerable has been known to exist in the centre of a stone. Some design has the Maker in all his works: it is, however, sometimes a puzzle to mankind to discover that

secret wisdom. So, too, when I see old men and old women living on long past dotage, when they can do little but groan over their maladies, sit in an inglenook, eat voraciously, and talk nonsense, I often ask myself, Why is that poor old sufferer not removed? what end does he serve in this active, progressing world? Is he there as a warning to us, as a picture of death in life, of the degradation possible to the human species? But what can one think when a soul is left in a world with which it has and can have no connection? Such cases are not so very rare. The body dies often by inches, and the mind lives on. At times the body lives vigorously, and the mind seems closed. The 'sick of the palsy' are not more rare than are the maniacs; yet often the paralysed die in body, or seem to die, long before the mind gives up the game.

Poor Scarron! he had been a long time a-dying. Limb after limb had been lost to him as completely as if they had been chopped off by a surgeon. Faculty after faculty left him without resources. He could neither write nor read nor move. He lay a mere lump of human flesh, with just a heart and lungs to keep him alive. Yet with all this, his mind retained the most extraordinary elasticity, as if to contrast with the rigidity of its outer case. He was like the Prince in the Arabian Nights whose lower portion was turned into stone. He lived no longer except in wit, and the more his body seemed to congeal, the brighter became his eccentric mind.

It is said that he had never had any religion, and that it was his wife who recalled him to a sense of his terrible position.

He had often made fun of the forms of worship, and still could not withhold his joke. When the curé told him that there was one consolation for his sufferings—that God *visited* him more than most people, he replied, 'Well, father, He does me too much honour.'

'You should thank Him,' replied the priest.

'What for?' said the blasphemer.

But life, as well as death, was all a joke to him. He left a will in wretched verse, but cleverly conceived, bequeathing to Corneille five hundred francs of patience; to Boileau's brother, who had attacked his wife, 'la gangrène et le haut mal,' and to

the Academy, 'the power to change the French language as often as it chose.' His bequests to his wife are in the most atrocious taste, replete with insinuations as to his own health. In a word, he was obscene to the last. He confesses that he had never before thought it possible to joke in the presence of death, but he had found it easy enough ; yet when he came to speak to his wife, he grew serious and the old melancholy rushed back upon him. Soon after he breathed his last, at the age of fifty-one, and in the year 1660, leaving a wife of five-and-twenty, who had been married to him nine years.

Madame Scarron was, perhaps, still more famous as a widow than as the wife of the great jester. She became the living representative of the importunate widow ; and, as in most cases, her importunity succeeded in the long run, though long that run certainly was. She wanted neither assurance nor perseverance. As instances of the former quality several stories are told to show that she did things simply to have it said that she was a strong minded woman. On one occasion she attended a man who had the small-pox, though she herself had never had it, and confessed that she was influenced to do so by the desire to undertake something which few other women would do. Again, though in good health, she took an emetic one day, in order to show that she did not mind what happened to her.

She now turned her attention to the necessity of living (which Voltaire would not allow), and as Scarron had left her nothing but his name—a very poor legacy—she applied for a continuance of his pension as the queen's patient. She was rudely told by Mazarin that she was in too good health to need it. Her petitions now became too frequent, always beginning with the words 'The widow Scarron most humbly supplicates your majesty ;' '*Au diable with la veuve Scarron,*' Louis used to say ; 'when shall I hear the last of her?' He never heard the last of her, indeed, till on his own death-bed, and more than once he must have blessed the very importunity which now disgusted his Majesty.

Françoise from this time got the regular name of 'The widow Scarron ;' no one spoke of her in any other terms. The name of Scarron had something ridiculous in it, and the legal form

'La veuve Scarron' added not a little to this. How was it, then, that this poor woman managed to become left-handed Queen of France?

Nous allons vous raconter cela. It must be premised that Françoise had a strong attachment to her late husband. Wretched cripple, obscene buffoon that he was, she still plunged beneath, and sounded fathoms of good heart under mere wave and seaweed of talk and vanity. *La veuve Scarron* was not so notoriously importunate, as not to have her admirers. She rejected them all, and remained poor and single, when men of birth and fortune offered to her. She was, in fact, carrying out her destiny, which had been predicted to her—so goes the tale—by a mason, and of which even Scarron had seemed to have a second sight. Johnson believed in second sight—we may at least quote an odd coincidence to illustrate the belief.

It may be doubted if poor Madame Scarron—so poor that, like her mother, she now supported herself by needlework,—had any real faith that a king would choose her out, not for mistress, but for wife. In the present day few women would covet being the wife of such a royal reprobate as Louis XIV., who took the royal road to sin, and incarcerated the husband when he took a fancy to the wife. In those days it was otherwise. Louis, though weakly fond of flattery, selfish, and inconstant, was just such a man as women cannot, in spite of their better feelings, help admiring. He was handsome after a Bourbon fashion, elegant, delicate, insinuating, and, in a word, *le grand monarque*.

All this would have had little effect on a woman who was sufficiently without passion to be highly respectable. A mere chance made her the wife of the great French king. The Montespan had a child, whose father was the king. True to the French character, the mistress would not take the trouble to rear it herself. She sought for an *institutrice*, and found one in Madame Scarron, who, though rather ashamed of the office, accepted her proposal. A house in the quiet quarter of the Marais was given her, and the young Duc de Maine was brought up very carefully by her; and the other children soon added to the widow's adopted family.

Louis, at first, took the greatest dislike to her, and even tried to induce the Montespan to get rid of that 'strong-minded woman.' But he was soon to change. The young Duc was sent to Barège for his health. Madame Scarron accompanied him as a matter of course, and the letters which she wrote the Montespan pleased the king. When she returned, and Louis was beginning to grow weary of his mistress, he was wont to ask the *gouvernante's* advice, and even to take it. This is an old story. How many a widower has married his children's governess! How many a man has broken an engagement to marry the *confidante*! Women do not know their power; and with a vain man, such as Louis was, there is no influence greater than that gained by probing his feelings. In other words, open his heart, if you can. Madame de Maintenon did not, perhaps, view the affair in this light; but she thought she could reform the monarch in her own person, and she did her best towards that object. She has been accused by Voltaire and others of cruelly supplanting the unfortunate Montespan, whom she induced the king to send away: but we respectable English will easily forgive her even such an act of ingratitude: we can think any measure excusable that turns a profligate into a respectable man. Louis was gradually influenced by the powerful mind and strong will of this clever and fascinating woman, and the two were eventually married in the most private manner. Madame de Maintenon—a name she took from an estate which she bought with her own or the king's money, and with which she hoped to obliterate the memory of Scarron—used her influence with her husband in a salutary manner; and the last days of Louis were better than the first. She was two years his senior, and could therefore control him. The king left her a pension of more than three thousand a year. She founded an establishment at St. Cyr, for the education of three hundred young ladies of small means. Perhaps she felt bitterly how her own poverty had been a reproach to her. She was almost worshipped as a saint at that place; and Walpole gives an amusing account of his visit to the establishment, where the young ladies sang Racine's 'Athaliah,' and performed 'proverbs' which their foundress had written for them.

Madame de Maintenon enjoyed the king's favour till his death, and ruled France sternly enough. Of course she made enemies, but she had several friends. Friends and foes, however, both agree in calling her fish-blooded and snow-hearted. She *might* be melted, but as a rule she was insoluble. She was at least respectable in a disreputable age, and that is much to say. She died in 1719, at the ripe old age of eighty-four; and perhaps France has not produced many such women, though France boasts of its women even more than of its men.



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